WHAT IF™ MARVEL® COMICS GROUP

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WHAT IF™ THE AVENGERS® HAD NEVER BEEN?

ALL NEW! NEVER SEEN BEFORE!!

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THOR! GIANT-MAN! WASP! YOU CAN'T QUIT NOW--!

--NOT WHILE THE HULK AND SUB-MARINER HAVE UNITED TO DESTROY MANKIND!

A TALE OF TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY IN THE TITANIC MARVEL TRADITION!

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WHAT IF MARVEL COMICS GROUP

STAN LEE PRESENTS: A STUNNING SAGA OF AN ALTERNATE REALITY!

WHAT IF... The AVENGERS HAD NEVER BEEN?

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"THE LOSS OF A MEMBER AS MIGHTY AS THE HULK COULD HAVE BEEN A CRIPPLING BLOW TO THE FLEDGLING TEAM IN THOSE TROUBLED DAYS! INSTEAD, IT UNITED THEM IN PURPOSE!"

HE'S ONE JOKER YOU CAN'T FIND IN THE CLASSIFIED ADS!

I TELL YOU WE'VE GOT TO FIND THE HULK! SO LONG AS HE IS RUNNING WILD, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT HE'LL DO!

IRON MAN IS RIGHT! SO SAYS THOR!

BUT HOW DO WE FIND HIM?

"WITH THE AID OF YOUNG RICK JONES THE RAMPAGING HULK WAS FOUND IN NEW MEXICO.

"ATTEMPTS TO REASON WITH THE GREEN-SKINNED BEHEMOTH FAILED — AND SO, AN ALMOST LEGENDARY BATTLE WAS FOUGHT IN AN EFFORT TO CAPTURE HIM!

"THE HULK ESCAPED, AND FLED, SEEKING A PLACE APART, TO BROOD AND PLAN. BUT WHEN THE MIGHTY CREATURE REACHED A BARREN ISLE IN THE ATLANTIC..."

THE SUB-MARINER!

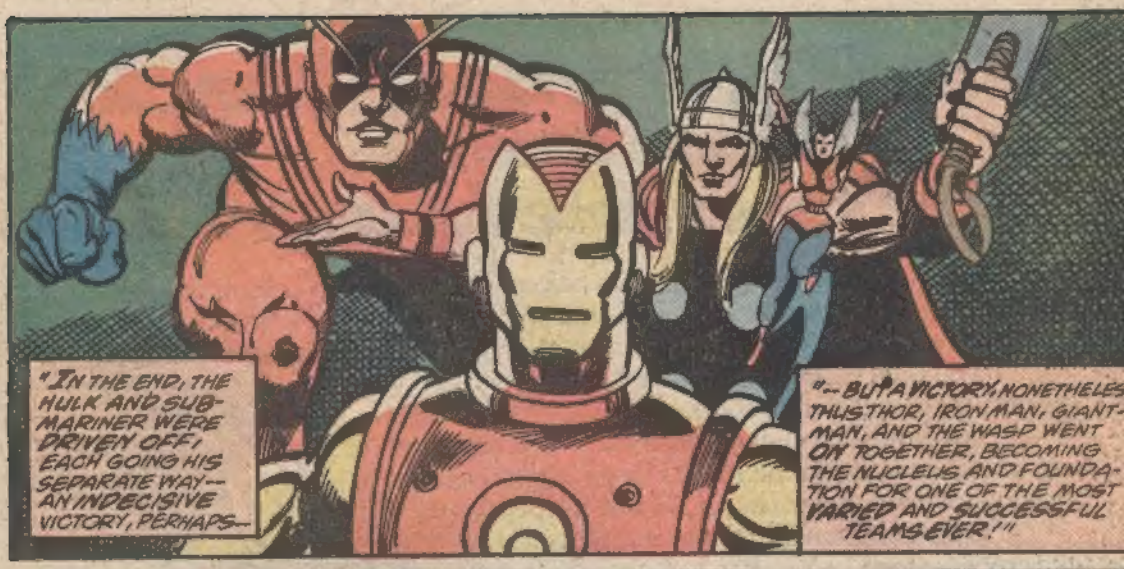
I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU HULK! AND YOU SHOULD BE FLATTERED! FOR, NORMALLY, THE SUB-MARINER WAITS FOR NOBODY!

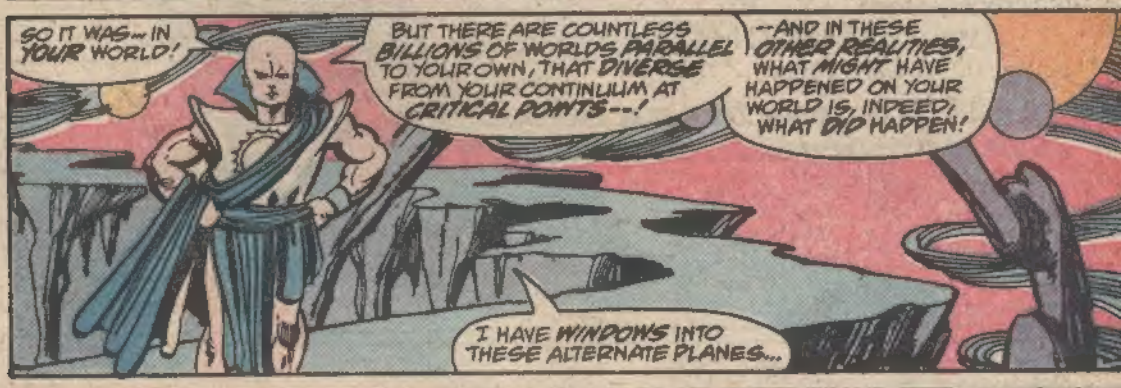
"AT FIRST, THE HULK LASHED OUT IN RAGE AT THE INTRUDING SEA-PRINCE...

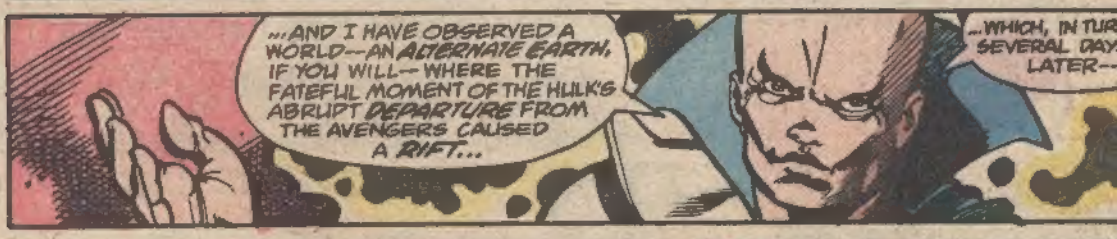
"...BUT THEIR BRIEF CONFRONTATION ENDED IN A DRAW — AND SOON AFTERWARD, THEY FORMED AN UNEASY ALLIANCE, BONDED BY THEIR MUTUAL HATRED FOR HUMANS!

"THEY BEGAN THEIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST MANKIND BY CHALLENGING THE AVENGERS TO BATTLE IN THE SHADOWS OF GIBRALTAR!

"NEVER HAS ANY GROUP OF HEROES FACED A STERNER TEST!







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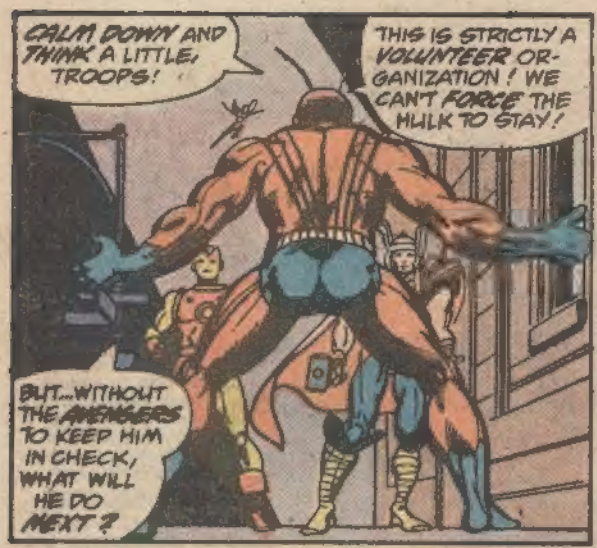
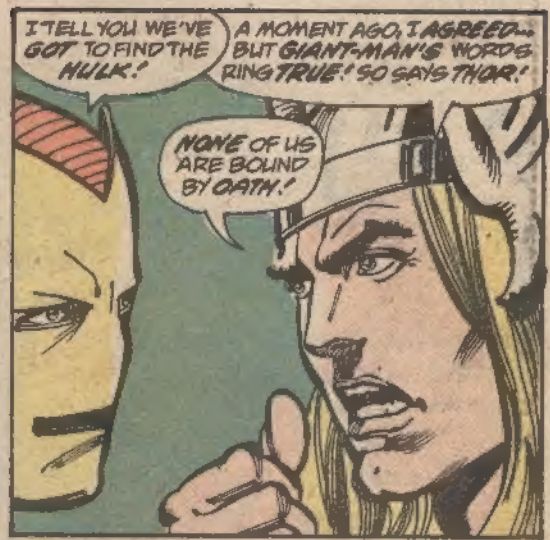

CALM DOWN AND THINK A LITTLE, TROOPS!
THIS IS STRICTLY A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION! WE CAN'T FORCE THE HULK TO STAY!
BUT...WITHOUT THE AVENGERS TO KEEP HIM IN CHECK, WHAT WILL HE DO NEXT?

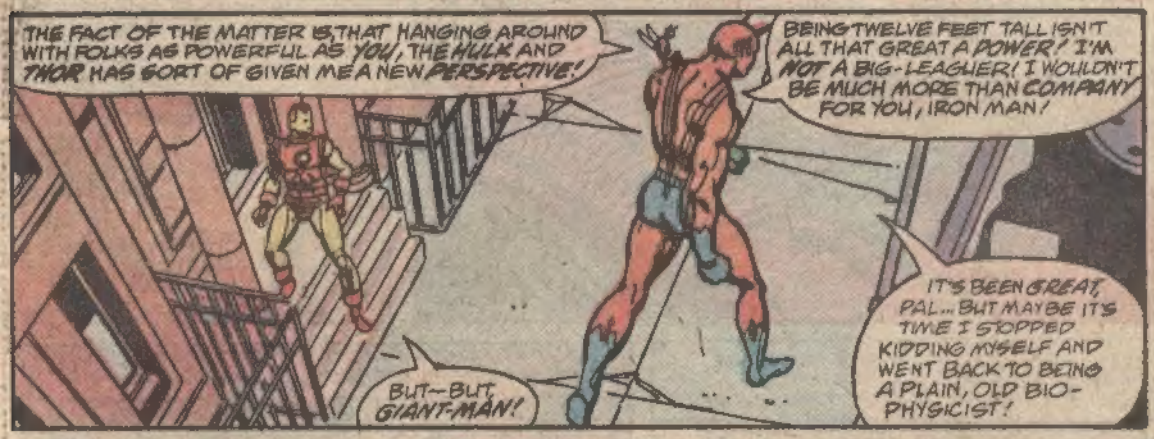

I TELL YOU WE'VE GOT TO FIND THE HULK!
A MOMENT AGO, I AGREED... BUT GIANT-MAN'S WORDS RING TRUE! SO SAYS THOR!
NONE OF US ARE BOUND BY OATH!

I NEVER FIGURED IT WAS NECESSARY! I GUESS WHAT YOU'RE DRIVING AT IS THAT YOU PLAN TO LEAVE, TOO!
SO GO AHEAD AND QUIT, LONGHAIR! I'VE JUST ABOUT HAD IT WITH YOUR BLASTED SUPERIORITY COMPLEX, ANYWAY!
STAY YOUR BITTERNESS, IRON MAN!
YOU CANNOT KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A GOD!

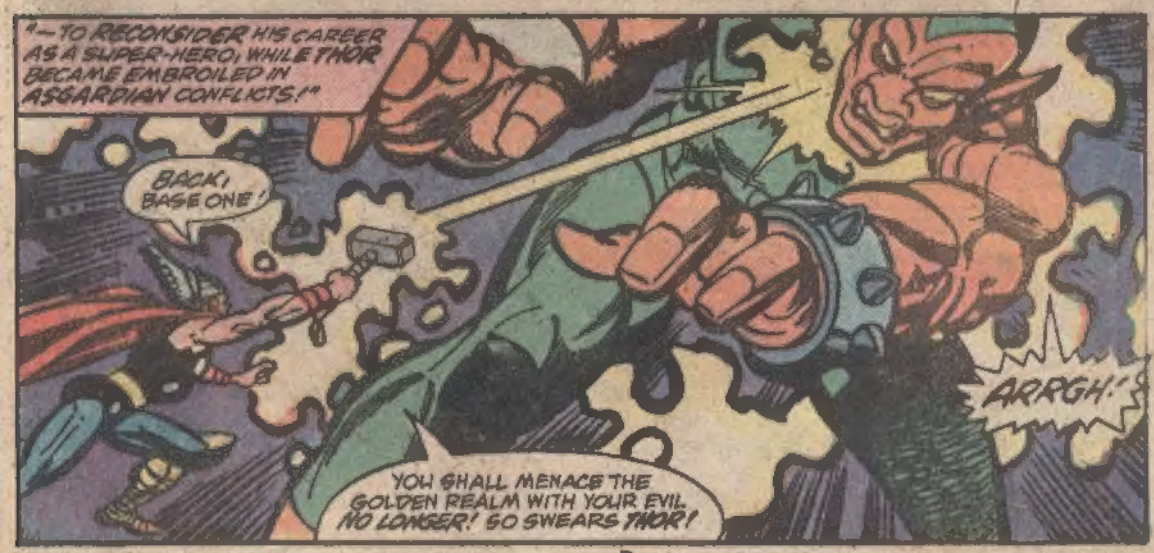
MAYHAP THE SON OF ODIN WAS NOT MEANT TO BATTLE ALONGSIDE MORTAL ALLIES!
THE GOD OF THUNDER HAS DUTIES TO PERFORM IN REALMS MERE HUMANS DARE NOT ENTER! 'TIS FAREWELL, THEN! MAY THY PATH BE NOT DARK!

WELL, THAT JUST ABOUT WRAPS IT UP, SHELL HEAD! WITHOUT THOR AND THE HULK, THE "MIGHTY AVENGERS" IS PRETTY MUCH A HOME!
YEAH—I SUPPOSE! STILL, YOU AND I MIGHT ACCOMPLISH A LOT TOGETHER, GIANT-MAN!
HEY! THE WASP IS STILL HERE! DON'T FORGET ME!

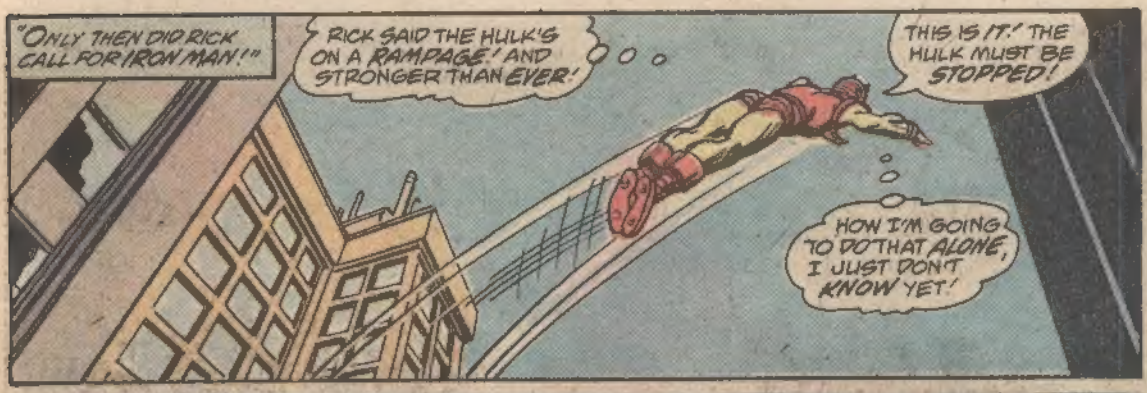
QUIET, JAN! THIS IS SERIOUS!
LOOK, IRON MAN... I KNOW THAT TEAMING UP WAS MY IDEA IN THE FIRST PLACE, BUT NOW, I— I WONDER IF THE WASP AND I SHOULDN'T LEAVE TOO!
RIGHT! WHY STICK AROUND IF THAT DREAMY THOR IS GONE!! ;SIGH;
JAN, PLEASE!

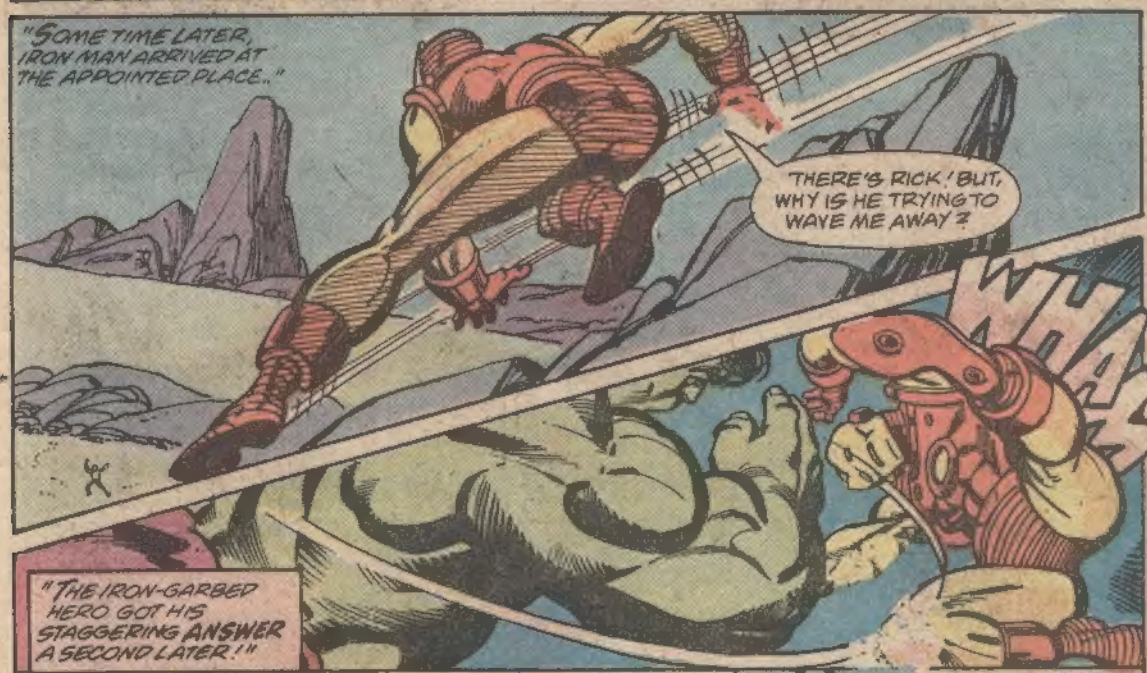

THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS, THAT HANGING AROUND WITH FOLKS AS POWERFUL AS YOU, THE HULK AND THOR HAS SORT OF GIVEN ME A NEW PERSPECTIVE!
BUT—BUT, GIANT-MAN!
BEING TWELVE FEET TALL ISN'T ALL THAT GREAT A POWER! I'M NOT A BIG-LEAGUER! I WOULDN'T BE MUCH MORE THAN COMPANY FOR YOU, IRON MAN!
IT'S BEEN GREAT, PAL... BUT MAYBE IT'S TIME I STOPPED KIDDING MYSELF AND WENT BACK TO BEING A PLAIN, OLD BIO-PHYSICIST!

I GET THE FEELING THAT WE'RE THROWING AWAY SOMETHING IRREPLACEABLE
BUT WHAT CAN I DO?
"THUS IN THIS ALTERNATE REALITY, HENRY PYM RETURNED TO HIS LABORATORY--


"—TO RECONSIDER HIS CAREER AS A SUPER-HERO, WHILE THOR BECAME EMBROILED IN ASGARDIAN CONFLICTS!"
BACK, BASE ONE!
ARRGH!
YOU SHALL MENACE THE GOLDEN REALM WITH YOUR EVIL NO LONGER! SO SWEARS THOR!

"AND SO, IRON MAN WAS LEFT ALONE IN THE PLUSH TOWNHOUSE HE OWNED AS ANTHONY STARK WHICH IN YOUR REALITY, EVENTUALLY BECAME KNOWN AS AVENGERS' MANSION--AND ALONE, HE SET OUT TO FIND THE HULK!"
HMM... I WAS GOING TO USE MY NEW IMAGE PROJECTOR TO SEARCH FOR THE HULK, BUT I HAVE A BETTER IDEA!
YOUNG RICK JONES SEEMS TO BE THE HULK'S FRIEND... IF THAT'S POSSIBLE! I'LL CONTACT HIM!
HE'S A SHORT-WAVE HAM RADIO OPERATOR! HE'S PROBABLY AT HIS SET RIGHT NOW!
"HALFWAY ACROSS THE COUNTRY, IN THE GREAT SOUTHWEST, THE GRIM-FACED TEENAGER RECEIVED IRON MAN'S MESSAGE!"
I UNDERSTAND! THE HULK IS TOO DANGEROUS TO ROAM OUT OF CONTROL! I'LL START SEARCHING AT ONCE!
"IT WAS NOT LONG UNTIL RICK LOCATED THE HULK--
"--BUT AT FIRST HE ATTEMPTED TO HANDLE THE BRUTE HIMSELF, JUST AS HE DID ON YOUR WORLD!
"IN BOTH CONTINUUMS, HE FAILED!"
HULK! WAIT! STOP!
NO USE! HE DOESN'T EVEN HEAR ME! HE'S COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL!


"ONLY THEN DID RICK CALL FOR IRON MAN!"
RICK SAID THE HULK'S ON A RAMPAGE! AND STRONGER THAN EVER!
THIS IS IT! THE HULK MUST BE STOPPED!
HOW I'M GOING TO DO THAT ALONE, I JUST DON'T KNOW YET!


"SOME TIME LATER, IRON MAN ARRIVED AT THE APPOINTED PLACE.."
THERE'S RICK! BUT, WHY IS HE TRYING TO WAVE ME AWAY?
WHAM
"THE IRON-GARBED HERO GOT HIS STAGGERING ANSWER A SECOND LATER!"

"THE BATTLE PROGRESSED MUCH AS IT DID IN YOUR WORLD..."
THIS WON'T STOP HIM, BUT IT'S SURE TO SLOW HIM DOWN!
BAH! IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO?

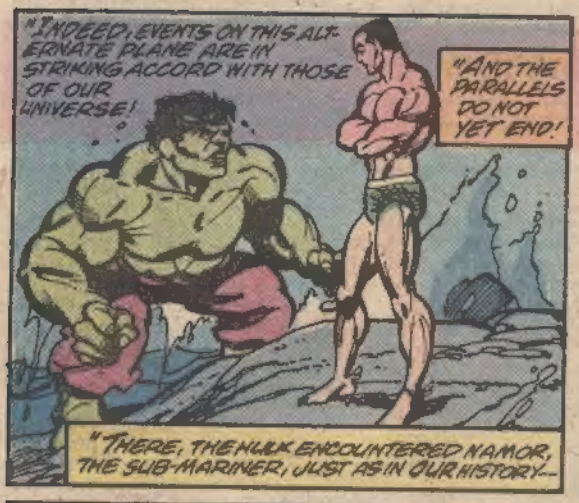
"IRON MAN COULD NOT CONVINCE THE HULK TO END HIS VENDETTA AGAINST HUMANITY--
"--NOR COULD HE CODE WITH THE MONSTER'S MATCHLESS STRENGTH, OR THE SAVAGERY OF HIS ATTACK!"

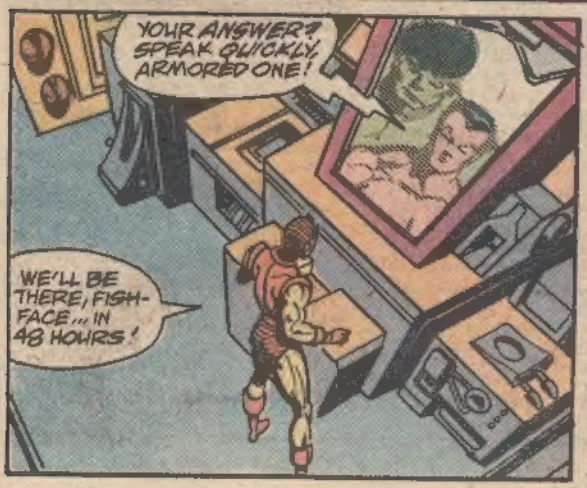
"PERHAPS IF IRON MAN HAD NOT HELD BACK, SO AS NOT TO INJURE HIS ONE-TIME ALLY, THE OUTCOME MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT!
"AS IT WAS, THE HULK ESCAPED!

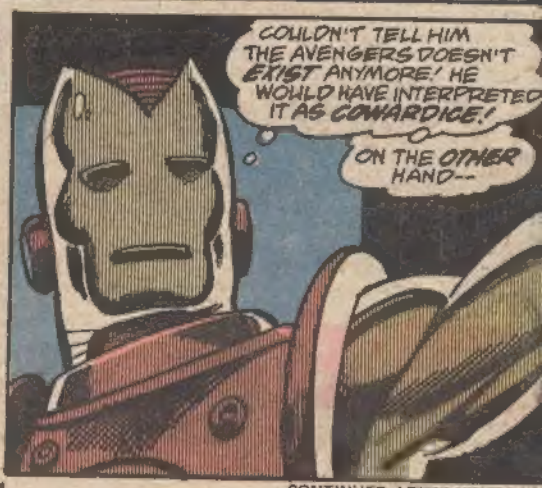
"WHILE THE WORLD KEPT FEARFUL VIGIL, AND ARMIES HUNTED THE EMERALD GIANT, IRON MAN RETURNED TO NEW YORK!"
GLAD YOU AGREED TO COME WITH ME, RICK! THE HULK MIGHT FIGURE YOU BETRAYED HIM AND TRY FOR REVENGE!
NAH, HE'D NEVER HURT ME, IRON MAN! I JUST WANNA HELP YOU FIND HIM, AND SETTLE HIM DOWN BEFORE HE GETS HURT!

WE'LL FIND HIM, ALL RIGHT, BUT FIRST--
--I'D BETTER REPAIR THIS BATTERED ARMOR-- JUST IN CASE HE STILL WON'T "SETTLE DOWN"!
YOU HAD A LOT OF GUTS TAKIN' HIM ON SINGLE-HANDED THAT WAY, MISTER! FOR A WHILE, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BEAT 'IM!

HE'S A TOUGH CUSTOMER, LAD! I DID MY BEST!
IF ONLY THE AVENGERS HAD STAYED TOGETHER--! I KNOW WE COULD HAVE CAPTURED THE HULK AS A TEAM!
"NOT TRUE, AS WE OF THIS REALITY KNOW. FOR HERE, THE AVENGERS DID FIGHT AS A TEAM, JUST AS FRUITLESSLY!"







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ZOUNDS! A ZEALFUL ZETETIC OF ZESTFUL ZANIES TO ZAP THE ZEITGEIST!

STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX

Hang onto your hats, heroes, 'cause here's the sizzling secret we've been sitting on for months! At last we can tell you the dynamite news! From now on, mighty Marvel— and only mighty Marvel— will be bringing you the monthly adventures of TARZAN— as well as JOHN CARTER OF MARS!!! That's right, Charlie! Can you imagine it? All the way-out wonderment of the great Edgar Rice Burroughs masterpieces brought to you by Marvel's most titanic talents! Starting March 22nd, you'll be able to pounce upon the very first TARZAN issue written by Rascally ROY THOMAS and drawn by Big JOHN BUSCEMA! Then, while your head's still swimmin', you can also grab JOHN CARTER OF MARS, sensationally scripted by our own Marvelous MARV WOLFMAN and illustrated through the magic of Gorrulous GIL KANE and Daring DAVE COCKRUM! Get to the newsstand early— send for a fast subscription— do it any way you can— but don't dare miss 'em! You'll see all the Burroughs magic as it was always meant to be— Tarzan, swift and strong and savage— John Carter, big and bold and barbarous! Think of it, the very first Marvel issue of each! Museums all around the world are probably already making room to display these historic volumes! Yep, here's your chance to possess a couple of instant heirlooms, and thrill to the kind of pulse-pounding yarns they just aren't writing anymore! TARZAN! JOHN CARTER OF MARS! Brought to you by Marvel! If only I wasn't too shy to really plug 'em! Hey, speaking of plugs— here's another unabashed and unsolicited commercial for one of my favorite mags. In case I haven't told you (lately, that is!), we also produce a merry little masterpiece called CELEBRITY. Within its slick, sleek, and shiny pages each month you'll find photo-bios about the most colorful celebs we know— from Woody Allen to John Travolta to Arnold Schwarzenegger to The Human Fly— you'll find 'em all in a plethora of peppy pictures in my own little fun-mag! CELEBRITY! TARZAN! JOHN CARTER! I know what you're thinking! "Why are we so good to you?" Well, don't bother showering us with gratitude— just go out there and BUY! And, while you're harvesting our cheery little cornucopia of culture, I know you're all saying, "Fiat justitia, ruat caelum!" Or, as Howard the Duck might put it, "Let justice be done, though the heavens fall!"

Excelsior!

ITEM! The Holiday season will be well behind you by the time you read this, but we're right in the midst of it as these words are being written. So, we'd like to launch this month's Bullpen notes with a very large *thank you* to the merry Marvelites kind enough to send us Christmas cards and Seasons Greetings. We love each and every one of them. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the writing-drawing-producing end of this crazy business, we momentarily forget one of the nicest things about our comics... the people who read them. Thanks again for reminding us with all those tremendous cards!

ITEM! Speaking of Christmas cards, all our staff and free-lancers are still stunned over the nifty one that Mirthful MARIE SEVERIN distributed among us. It's a detailed drawing of our entire offices and has just about everyone in the whole blemed Bullpen cavorting through it. This has to be one of the wildest works of art since Peter Breughel did his last big medieval crowd scene some several centuries ago. Marie originally did the drawing as a wrap-around cover for FOOM, our fearless fan mag, and if you're one of the lucky subscribers, then you've already seen said work of art gracing your latest issue and know whereof we speak. Perhaps next year, if we do one of our Holiday Treasuries, we can persuade Ms. Severin to let us reprint her momentous masterpiece. Then, of course, the only problem will be getting everyone in the Bullpen not to do anything like dieting, hair-restyling, or extensive orthodontic work that might possibly alter their appearance...

ITEM! Last time around, we laid a hint on you about a new title in the works, namely, "He's green and mean and leaves an imprint on the scene." All those who thought it might be ANGAAR, THE GIANT CELERY STALK WHO WALKED LIKE A MAN get an "A" for imagination... and free psychiatric counseling. No, we were hinting about none other than GODZILLA, the mammoth movie monster whom we think is going to be every bit as big (Ouch!) in comics. In about two months, you'll be able to judge for yourself, as that's when it will be on sale. In the meantime—after some editorial huddling with Artful ARCHIE GOODWIN—writer DOUG MOENCH and artist HERB TRIMPE are pouring their talent, soul, and enthusiasm into the frantic first issue. The series is going to be all original material, not adaptations of any of the movies (though, naturally, we're going to be drawing on the Big G's background from the films), with both brand-new continuing characters as well as some old familiar faces from the mighty Marvel Universe (and just who they might be we're going to hold off telling, just to save a few surprises for you). With the new ideas and directions we have for GODZILLA, this just might possibly be *the* fun book of 1977... but don't believe any rumors you hear that the first thing we did was to have art director JOHNNY ROMITA design a costume for the gargantuan one!

ITEM! Just as we were about to deliver this page to the printer, MARV WOLFMAN, deadline conscious as ever, let us know that his wife MICHELE just gave birth to a baby daughter, JESSICA MORGAN (Gee, a wolf*girl*)! Our congratulations to the proud, first-time parents and our love and best wishes to the *three* of you.

ITEM! While we're in a congratulating mood, let's also hear it for Fearless FRANK GIACOIA, whose daughter MARY recently made him a grandfather when she had a daughter of her own. Frank is almost as proud of his new status as we are of his inking on both CAPTAIN AMERICA and our latest hit book, NOVA. We hope you're still doing them when you're a great-grandfather, Frank!

ITEM! As a final note, our apologies to BOB PINAHA, CHRIS PADAVANO, and all other members of the FANS OF CENTRAL JERSEY. In an item in our March Bullpen Bulletin on the debut performance of the new "Ballad of Red Sonja" we neglected to mention their aid and contribution to the whole affair's success. (Okay, guys! *Now* will you release Howard the Duck? He's already missed important guest appearances on Face the Nation, David Brinkley's Journal, and Zoo Parade!)

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ROGER SLIFER, ROGER STERN, ED HANNIGAN — Assistant Editors
ROY THOMAS, LEN WEIN, MARV WOLFMAN, STEVE GERBER — Consulting Editors
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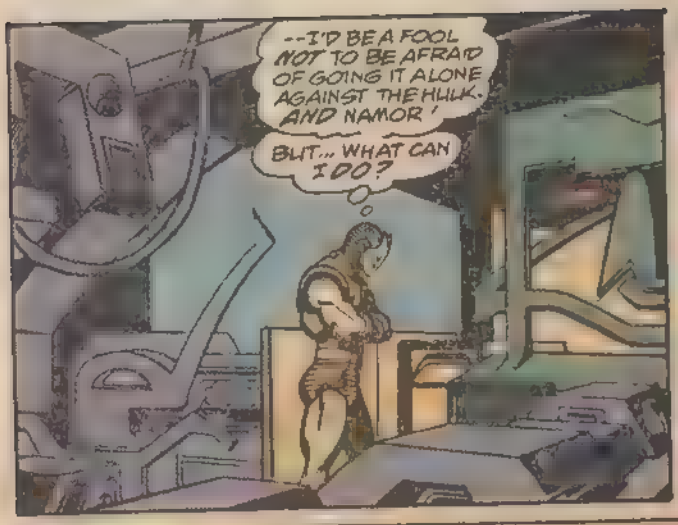
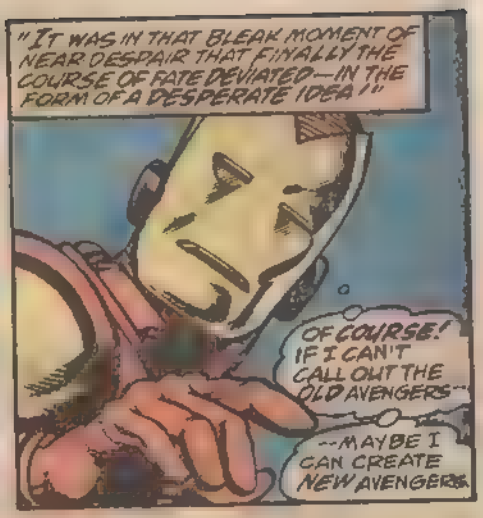
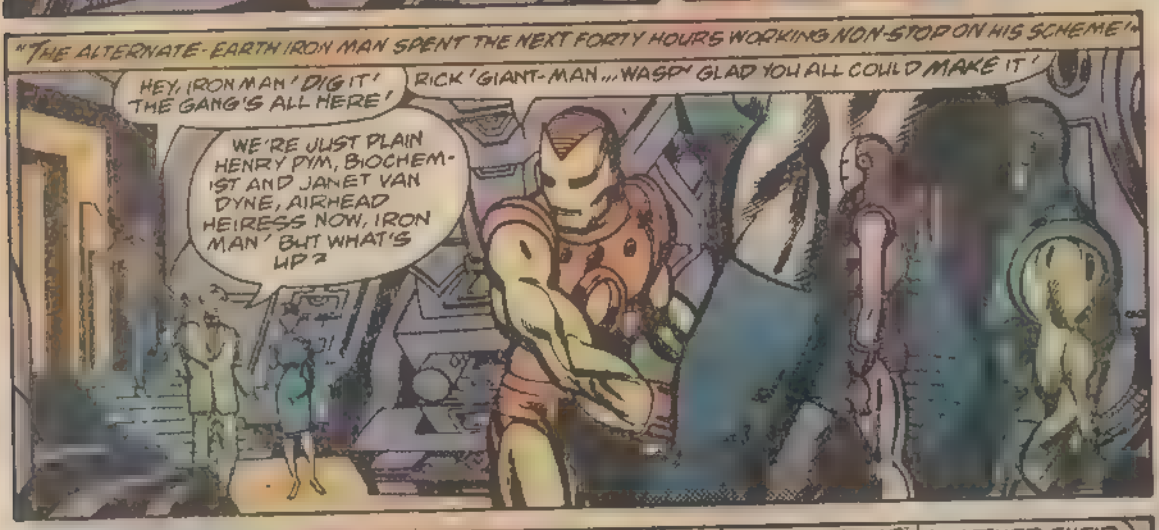
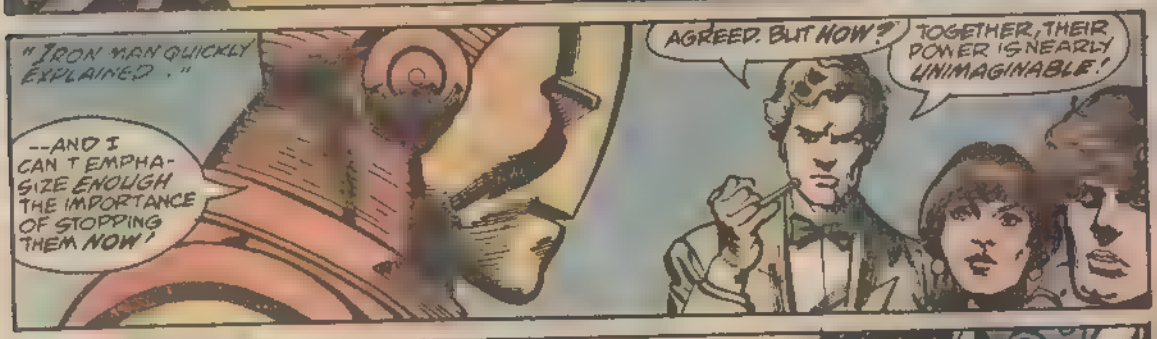
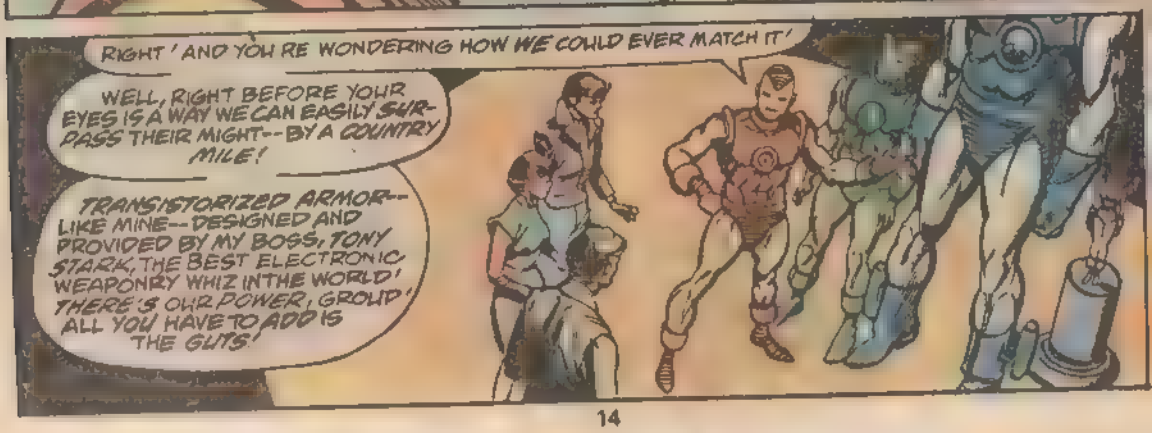
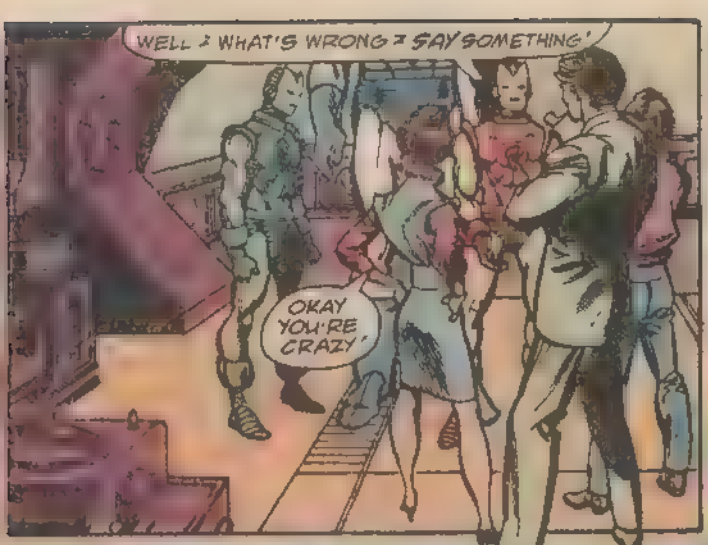

--I'D BE A FOOL NOT TO BE AFRAID OF GOING IT ALONE AGAINST THE HULK AND NAMOR!
BUT... WHAT CAN I DO?


"IT WAS IN THAT BLEAK MOMENT OF NEAR DESPAIR THAT FINALLY THE COURSE OF FATE DEVIATED—IN THE FORM OF A DESPERATE IDEA!"
OF COURSE! IF I CAN'T CALL OUT THE OLD AVENGERS--
--MAYBE I CAN CREATE NEW AVENGERS

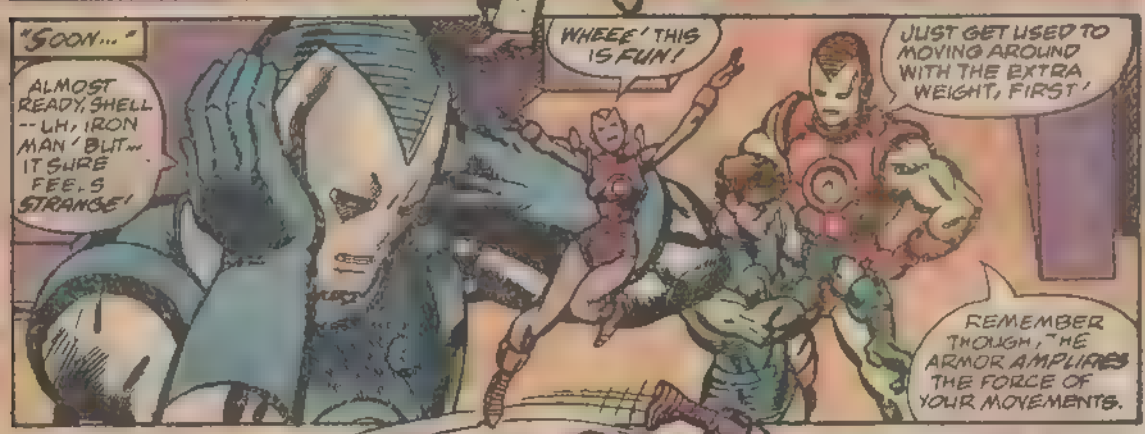

"THE ALTERNATE-EARTH IRON MAN SPENT THE NEXT FORTY HOURS WORKING NON-STOP ON HIS SCHEME!"
HEY, IRON MAN! DIG IT! THE GANG'S ALL HERE!
RICK! GIANT-MAN... WASP! GLAD YOU ALL COULD MAKE IT!
WE'RE JUST PLAIN HENRY PYM, BIOCHEMIST AND JANET VAN DYNE, AIRHEAD HEIRESS NOW, IRON MAN! BUT WHAT'S UP?


"IRON MAN QUICKLY EXPLAINED."
--AND I CAN'T EMPHASIZE ENOUGH THE IMPORTANCE OF STOPPING THEM NOW!
AGREED. BUT NOW?
TOGETHER, THEIR POWER IS NEARLY UNIMAGINABLE!

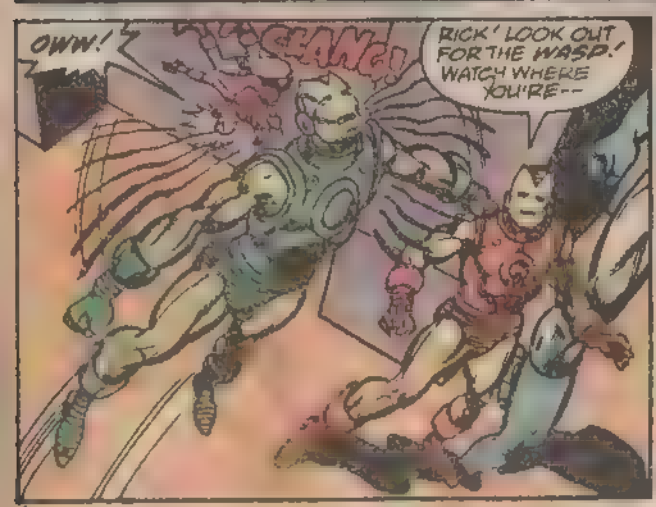

RIGHT! AND YOU'RE WONDERING HOW WE COULD EVER MATCH IT!
WELL, RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES IS A WAY WE CAN EASILY SURPASS THEIR MIGHT--BY A COUNTRY MILE!
TRANSISTORIZED ARMOR--LIKE MINE--DESIGNED AND PROVIDED BY MY BOSS, TONY STARK, THE BEST ELECTRONIC WEAPONRY WHIZ IN THE WORLD! THERE'S OUR POWER, GROUP! ALL YOU HAVE TO ADD IS THE GUTS!

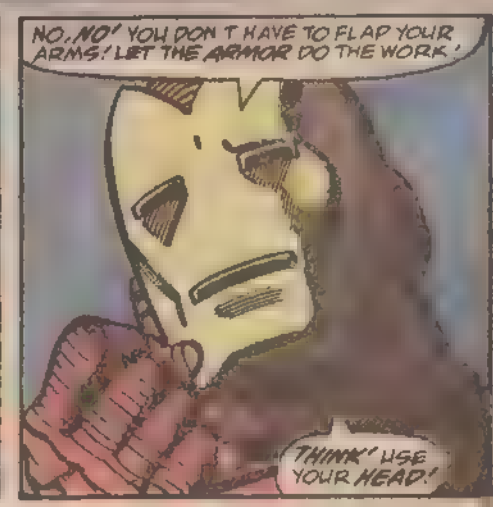

WELL ? WHAT'S WRONG ? SAY SOMETHING!
OKAY YOU'RE CRAZY!

I DON'T KNOW JAN! THE IDEA IS SOUND!
HENRY PYM! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT THIS COLOR CLASHES WITH MY EYE SHADOW!


"SOON..."
ALMOST READY, SHELL -- UH, IRON MAN! BUT... IT SURE FEELS STRANGE!
WHEEE! THIS IS FUN!
JUST GET USED TO MOVING AROUND WITH THE EXTRA WEIGHT, FIRST!
REMEMBER THOUGH, THE ARMOR AMPLIFIES THE FORCE OF YOUR MOVEMENTS.

LOOK, MA, NO WINGS!
I WISH TONY HAD CONSULTED WITH MY FASHION DESIGNER, THOUGH
THIS DOES NOTHING FOR MY FIGURE, AND--
WHOOPS! GLAD HE PUT A MASK ON IT! THIS IS GETTING... EMBARRASSING!
OH... GOODNESS! I-I'M REALLY OUT OF CONTROL! HANK! SOMEBODY! HELP!


OWW!
SCAN!
RICK! LOOK OUT FOR THE WASP! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE--


NO, NO! YOU DON'T HAVE TO FLAP YOUR ARMS! LET THE ARMOR DO THE WORK!
THINK! USE YOUR HEAD!

FLYIN'S COOL, BUT I THINK I'M STARTIN' TO GET... AIRSICK!
HOLD ON, WASP! I'LL CATCH YOU!
WHOA! I-I'M AIRBORNE! I MUST HAVE ACCIDENTALLY ACTIVATED THE BOOSTER JETS!
LOVER, HELP ME! I CAN'T TURN IT OFF!
CRAK
UHHMPH!
RICK! BLAST IT, CAN'T YOU SEE?
I THOUGHT I EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO EACH OF YOU! DIDN'T ANYBODY LISTEN? YOU'VE GOT TO CONCENTRATE!
IT'S HARD TO WORK THESE SUITS! WE'RE TRYING!
DON'T BE SO MEAN!
DAMN IT! I WORKED DAY AND NIGHT ON THAT ARMOR--!
--UH, WITH STARK! ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU GIVE IT SOME RESPECT! NOW LET'S TAKE IT FROM THE TOP!
GEE, IRON MAN, WE--
SHUT UP!

THAT DOES IT! I'M LEAVING! IF YOU WANTED PERFECTION, YOU SHOULD HAVE BUILT ROBOTS, YOU... YOU TIN-PLATED TYRANT!
JAN! WAIT!
YOU GO WITH HIM IF YOU WANT, HENRY PYM-- BUT I'M NOT!
GIANT-MAN, LOOK... I-I-M SORRY!
DON'T SWEAT IT, RUST-POT! IN A WAY, I'M GLAD IT HAPPENED! I WAS BEGINNING TO HAVE MY DOUBTS ABOUT THIS WILD SCHEME ANYWAY!
JAN AND I HAD DECIDED TO GIVE UP THE HERO B.Z.. I GUESS WE'LL STICK TO OUR DECISION!
GEE, IRON MAN.
...I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A SUPER-HERO, BUT.. WELL, THIS ARMOR JUST ISN'T MY GIG, Y'SEE! MAYBE.. IF YOU COULD SOMEHOW GIVE ME SUPER-POWERS--?
NO, LAD.. I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE ANY MAGIC POTIONS! I THINK YOU'D BETTER GO WITH THE OTHERS, NOW!
YEAH, I GUESS.. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE HULK AN' SUBBY?
I'LL, UH, THINK OF SOMETHING! MAYBE I CAN GET SOME HELP FROM THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
HEY, THAT WOULD BE THE COOLEST! GOOD LUCK!
"MOMENTS LATER..."
THEY'VE ALL SHED THEIR ARMOR AND DESERTED ME! AND I REALLY CAN'T BLAME THEM!
SO TIRED... HAVEN'T SLEPT FOR TWO DAYS! NO WONDER MY HEAD ACHES! STILL, I SHOULDN'T HAVE YELLED AT THEM!
SO I'M ALONE AGAIN! AS IT BEGAN... SO IT IS ONCE MORE!

NOW, WHAT, STARK? SHOULD YOU ASK THE F.F. TO STAND IN AND TAKE THE RAP FOR YOU...?

IF ONLY THE OTHERS HADN'T LEFT! WITH THE NEW POWERS I BUILT INTO THEIR ARMOR I KNOW WE'D WIN AS A TEAM!

BUT ALONE? MY OWN SUIT OF ARMOR MAY STILL BE THE FINEST FIGHTING APPARATUS EVER MADE... BUT FOR ALL [illegible] ITS [illegible] POWER, [illegible] SIDE!

[illegible] I BATTLE, I [illegible] DRAINING MY HEART, OR DRAINING THE POWER OF THE DEVICE IN MY CHEST-PLATE THAT KEEPS IT BEATING!

I'VE WALKED A LONG TIME ON THE EDGE OF DEATH--

--TOO LONG TO FEAR IT ANYMORE!

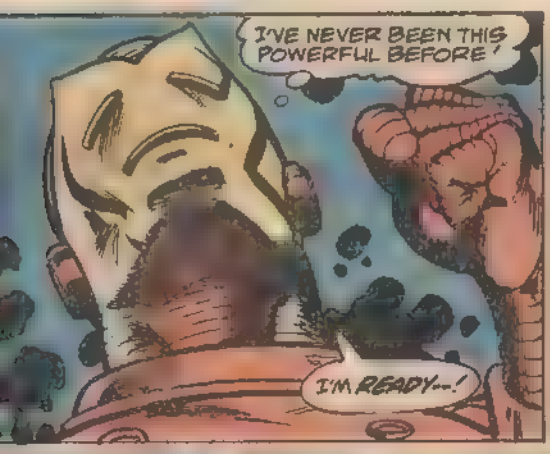
THERE! THE ELECTRO-ENERGIZER IS SET ON MAXIMUM!

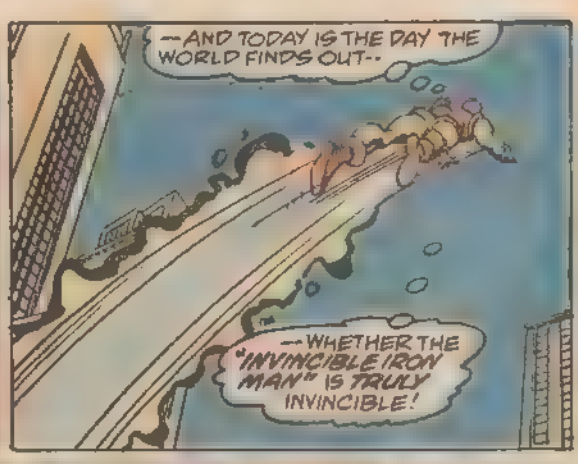
I'VE OVERRIDDEN MY VOLTAGE LIMITERS! NOW I CAN TAKE ON POWER BEYOND MY TRANSISTOR BATTERIES' RATED TOLERANCE--

--ALL THE WAY TO THEIR THEORETICAL MAXIMUMS! I'LL ALSO CROSS-CHANNEL MY SOLAR-BATTERIES TO STORE ADDITIONAL ENERGY--!

ALL EXCEPT ONE BANK WHICH I'LL KEEP ISOLATED! IT'LL FEED DIRECTLY INTO MY CHEST-DEVICE SO MY HEART WILL HAVE A GUARANTEED, INDEPENDENT POWER SUPPLY THAT WILL ONLY BE REDIRECTED IN DIREST EMERGENCY.

IN SHORT, MY ARMOR IS ADJUSTED FOR ONE ALL-OUT BATTLE!





"MEANWHILE..."

HEY! PUFF WAIT UP! PUFF

IT'S THE FASTEST WAY ACROSS TOWN AT RUSH HOUR, RICK! THAT'S WHY WE DIDN'T CHANGE BACK TO OUR CIVVIES!

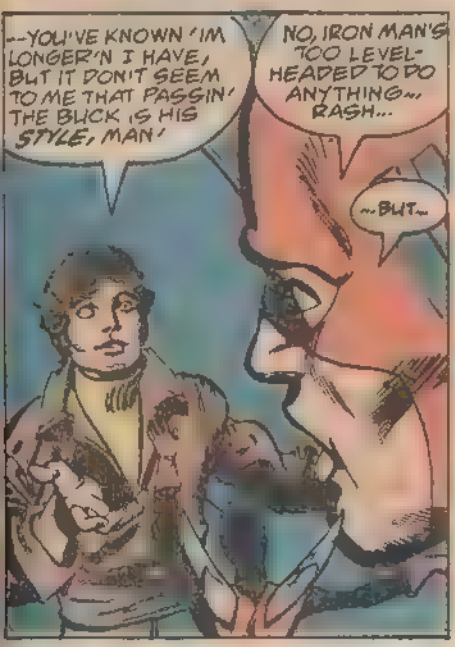
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM!

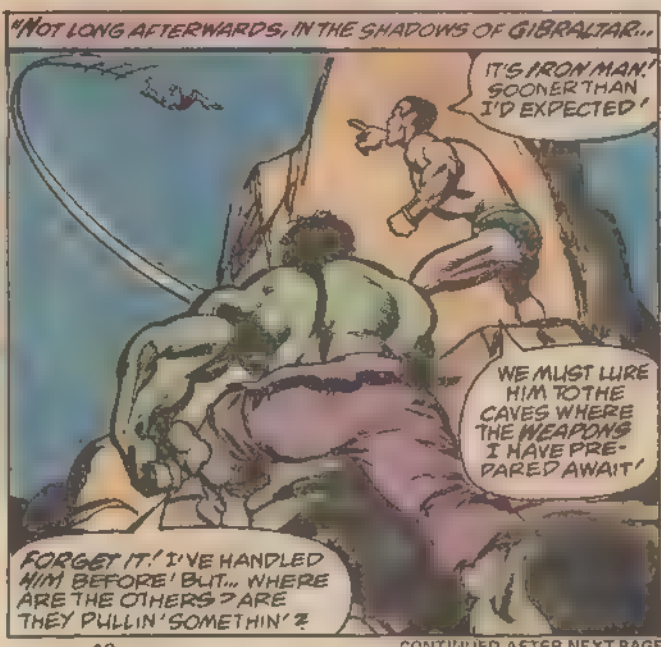
S' HARD TO PUFF CATCH A GUY TAKIN' GIANT STRIDES LIKE YOURS!

WELL, I BEEN THINKIN' ABOUT WHAT IRON MAN SAID--

--ABOUT GETTIN' HELP SOMEWHERE ELSE--? THE F F MAYBE, AN' WELL--

CAN'T IT WAIT? BLUE EYES, HERE, AND I HAVE A DATE!





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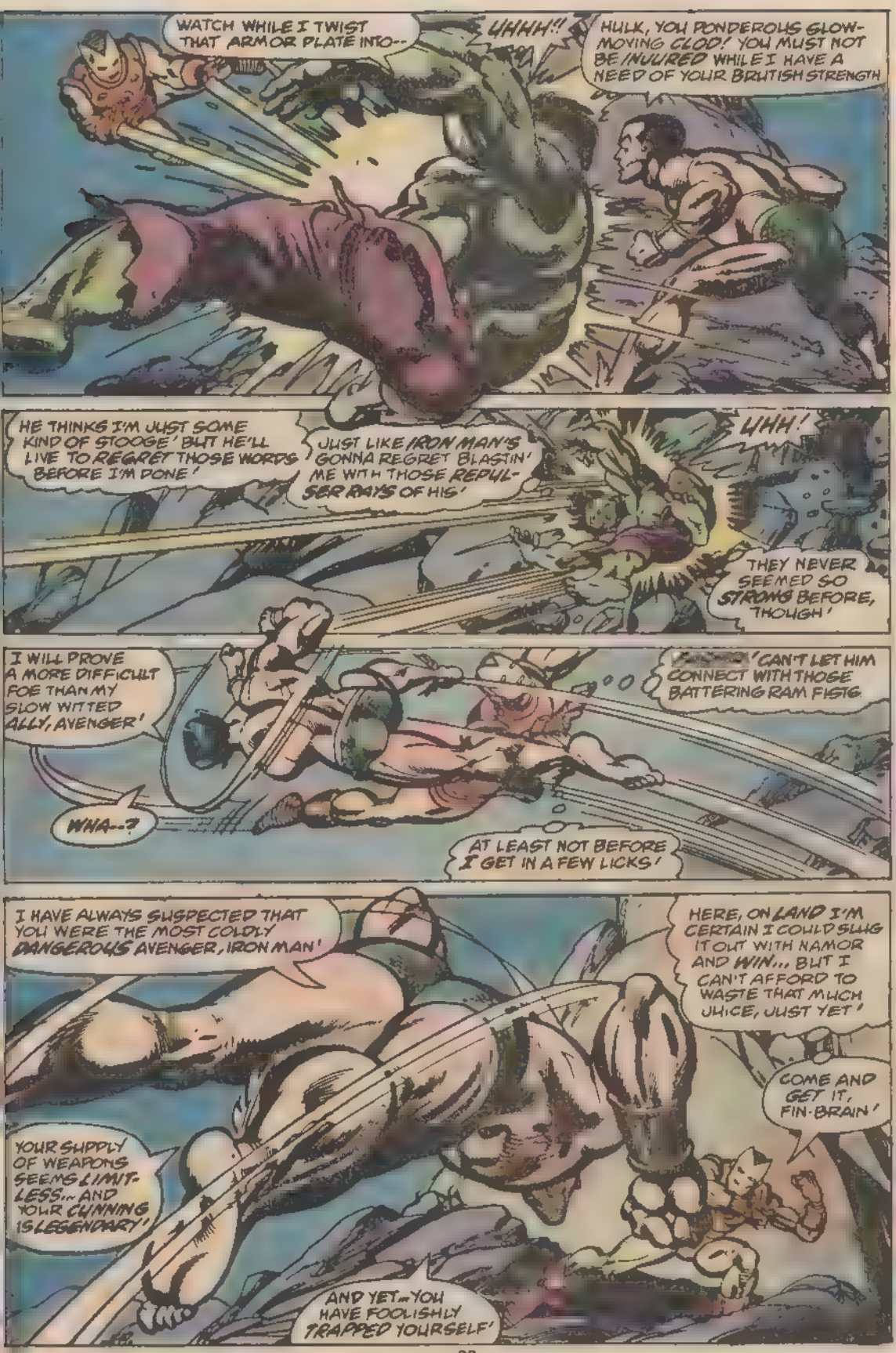
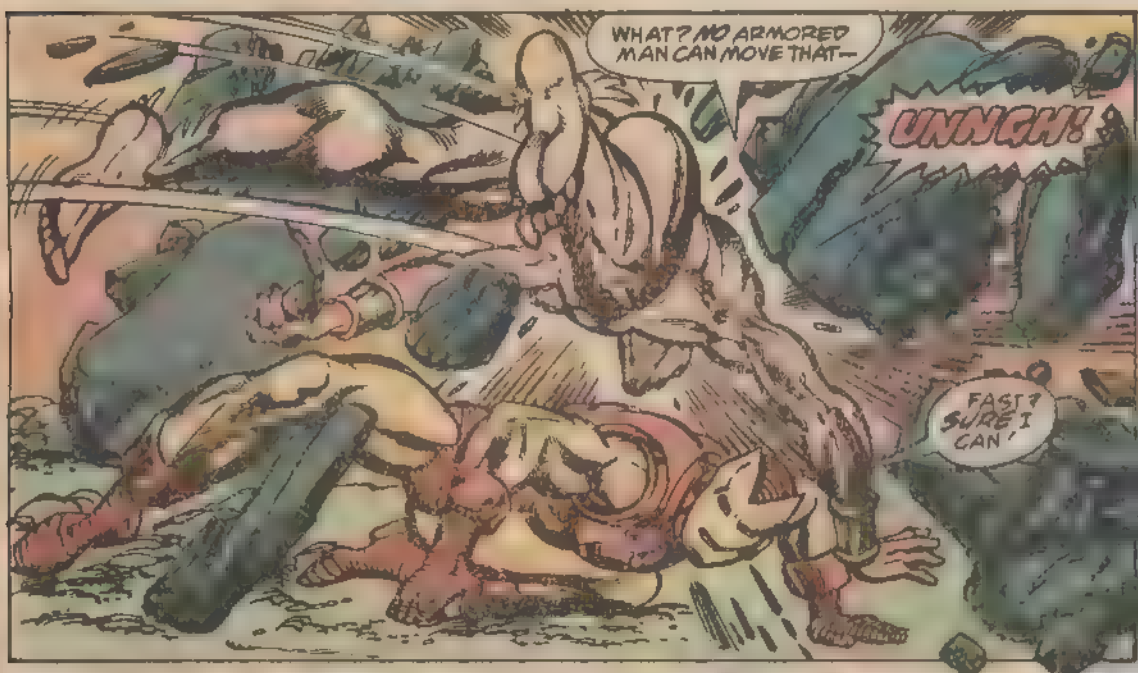
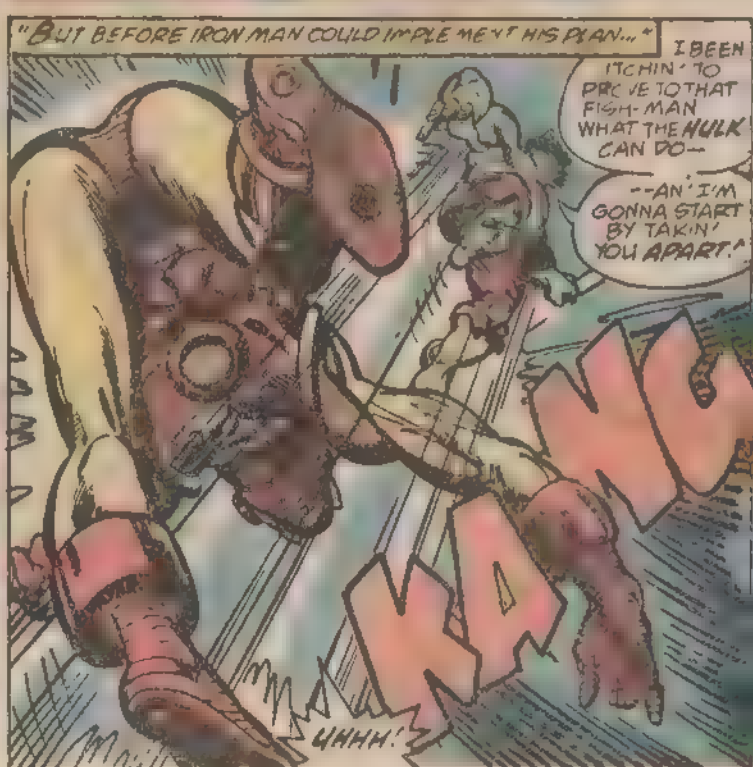
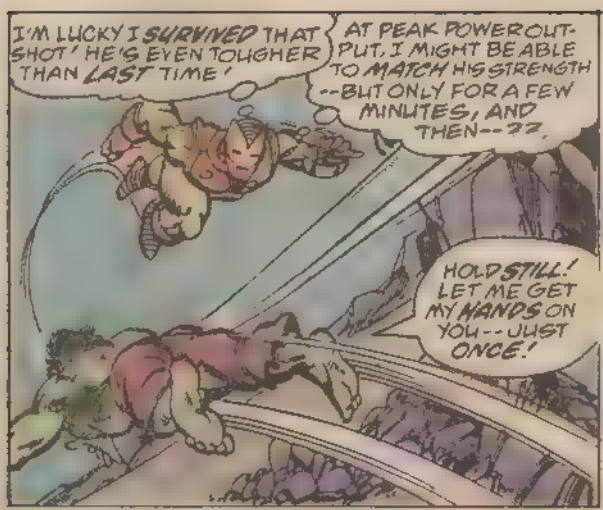

WATCH WHILE I TWIST THAT ARMOR PLATE INTO--
UHHH!!
HULK, YOU PONDEROUS SLOW-MOVING CLOD! YOU MUST NOT BE INJURED WHILE I HAVE A NEED OF YOUR BRUTISH STRENGTH
HE THINKS I'M JUST SOME KIND OF STOOGE! BUT HE'LL LIVE TO REGRET THOSE WORDS BEFORE I'M DONE!
JUST LIKE IRON MAN'S GONNA REGRET BLASTIN' ME WITH THOSE REPULSER RAYS OF HIS!
UHH!
THEY NEVER SEEMED SO STRONG BEFORE, THOUGH!
I WILL PROVE A MORE DIFFICULT FOE THAN MY SLOW WITTED ALLY, AVENGER!
CAN'T LET HIM CONNECT WITH THOSE BATTERING RAM FISTS
WHA--?
AT LEAST NOT BEFORE I GET IN A FEW LICKS!
I HAVE ALWAYS SUSPECTED THAT YOU WERE THE MOST COLDLY DANGEROUS AVENGER, IRON MAN!
HERE, ON LAND I'M CERTAIN I COULD SLUG IT OUT WITH NAMOR AND WIN... BUT I CAN'T AFFORD TO WASTE THAT MUCH JUICE, JUST YET!
COME AND GET IT, FIN-BRAIN!
YOUR SUPPLY OF WEAPONS SEEMS LIMITLESS... AND YOUR CUNNING IS LEGENDARY!
AND YET... YOU HAVE FOOLISHLY TRAPPED YOURSELF!

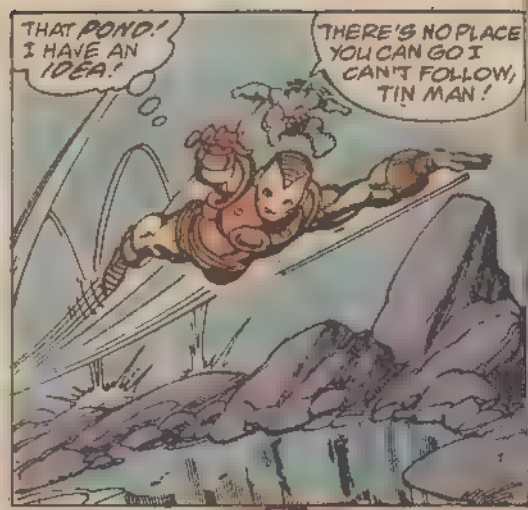

WHAT? NO ARMORED MAN CAN MOVE THAT—
UNNGH!
FAST? SURE I CAN!

HE'S DOWN! OUT COLD! NOW FOR THE HULK!

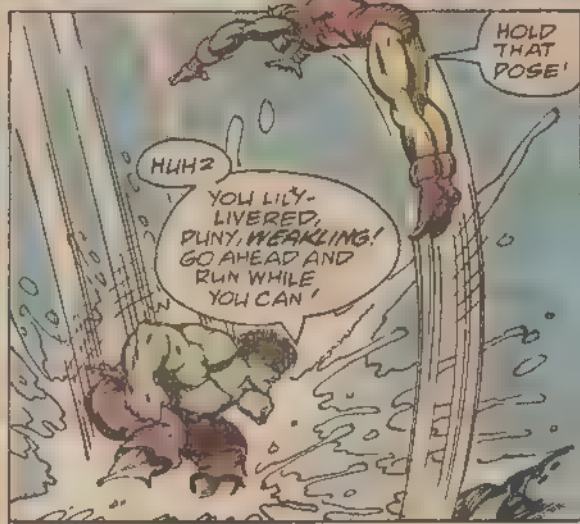
HE'S NOWHERE IN SIGHT!
BLAST! HE'S AWARE OF MY INCREASED POWER AND HE'S TRYING TO AMBUSH ME AGAIN!
HAVE TO GAIN ALTITUDE ... USE MY BUILT-IN RADAR TO SPOT HIM!

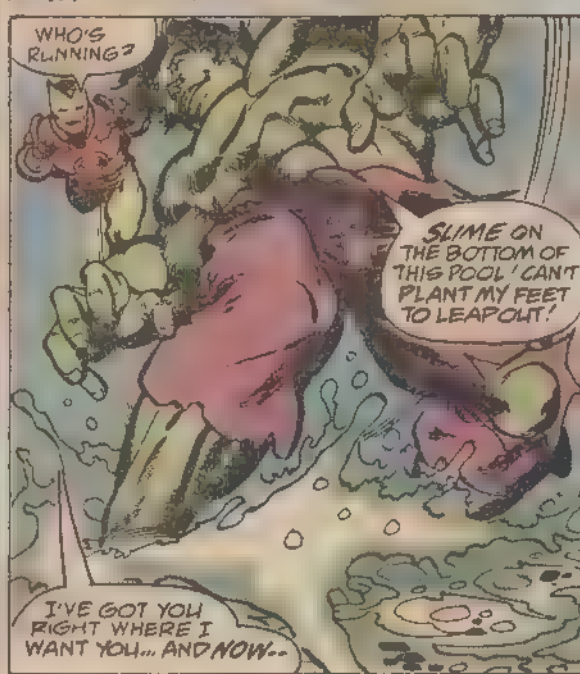

"BUT BEFORE IRON MAN COULD IMPLEMENT HIS PLAN..."
I BEEN ITCHIN' TO PROVE TO THAT FISH-MAN WHAT THE HULK CAN DO—
--AN' I'M GONNA START BY TAKIN' YOU APART."
KA-NG
UHHH!


I'M LUCKY I SURVIVED THAT SHOT! HE'S EVEN TOUGHER THAN LAST TIME!
AT PEAK POWER OUTPUT, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO MATCH HIS STRENGTH --BUT ONLY FOR A FEW MINUTES, AND THEN--??
HOLD STILL! LET ME GET MY HANDS ON YOU--JUST ONCE!

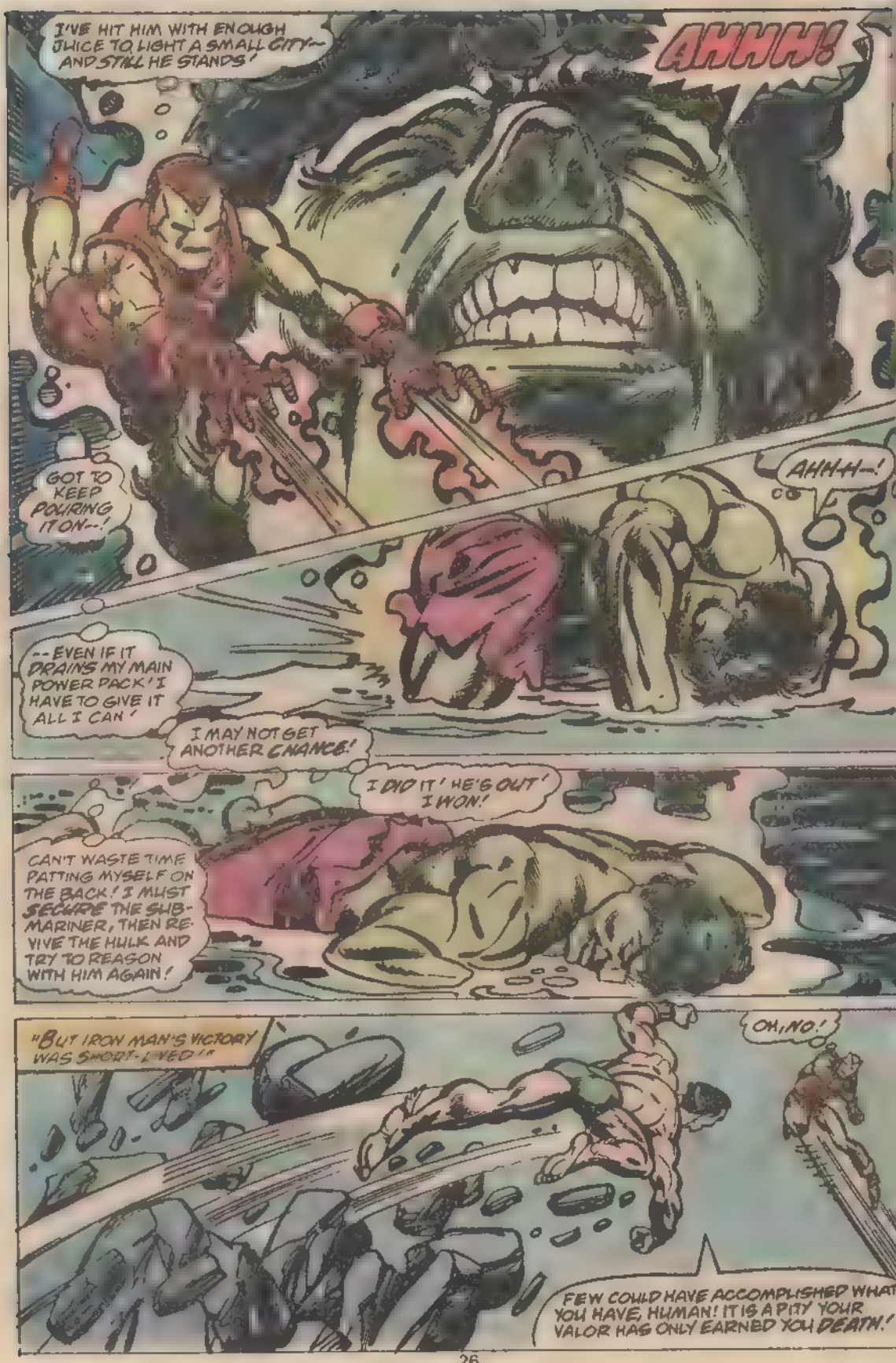

THAT POND! I HAVE AN IDEA!
THERE'S NO PLACE YOU CAN GO I CAN'T FOLLOW, TIN MAN!

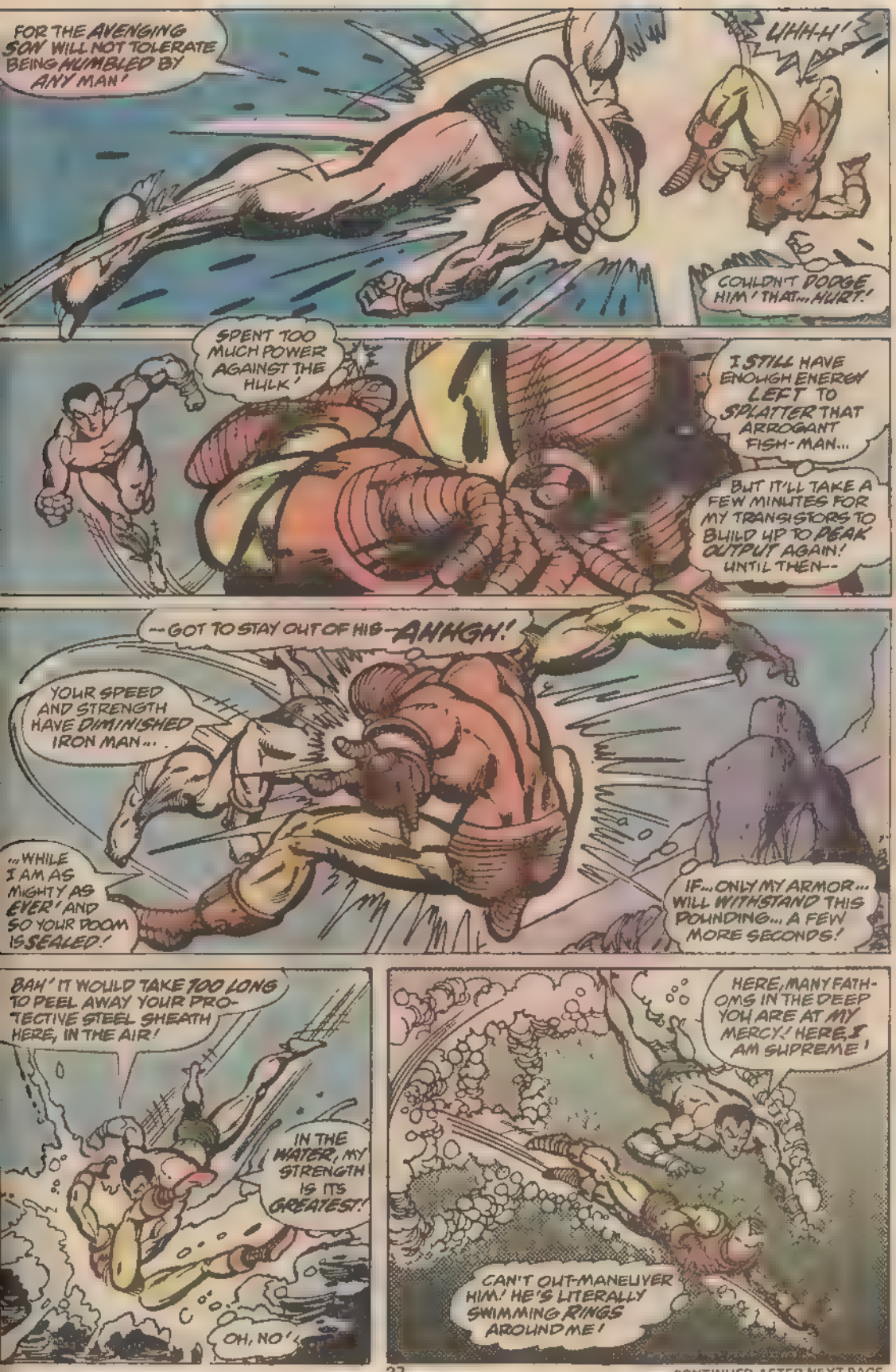
AND WHEN I CATCH YOU I'LL RIP YOU TO SHREDS!
ENOUGH THREATS, BIG MAN, LET'S HAVE IT OUT RIGHT HERE AND NOW!


HOLD THAT POSE!
HUH?
YOU LILY-LIVERED, PUNY, WEAKLING! GO AHEAD AND RUN WHILE YOU CAN!


WHO'S RUNNING?
SLIME ON THE BOTTOM OF THIS POOL! CAN'T PLANT MY FEET TO LEAP OUT!
I'VE GOT YOU RIGHT WHERE I WANT YOU... AND NOW--

ARRRGH!
ZZZZT
"HOPELESSLY GROUNDED IN THE STAGNANT, BRINE-FILLED POOL, THE HULK WRITHED IN UTTER AGONY AS IRON MAN SENT A HIGH VOLTAGE ELECTRIC CHARGE CRACKLING FROM HIS TRANSISTORIZED GAUNTLETS!"


I'VE HIT HIM WITH ENOUGH JUICE TO LIGHT A SMALL CITY— AND STILL HE STANDS!
AHHH!
GOT TO KEEP POURING IT ON--!
AHH-H--!
--EVEN IF IT DRAINS MY MAIN POWER PACK! I HAVE TO GIVE IT ALL I CAN!
I MAY NOT GET ANOTHER CHANCE!
I DID IT! HE'S OUT! I WON!
CAN'T WASTE TIME PATTING MYSELF ON THE BACK! I MUST SECURE THE SUB-MARINER, THEN RE-VIVE THE HULK AND TRY TO REASON WITH HIM AGAIN!
"BUT IRON MAN'S VICTORY WAS SHORT-LIVED!"
OH, NO!
FEW COULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED WHAT YOU HAVE, HUMAN! IT IS A PITY YOUR VALOR HAS ONLY EARNED YOU DEATH!



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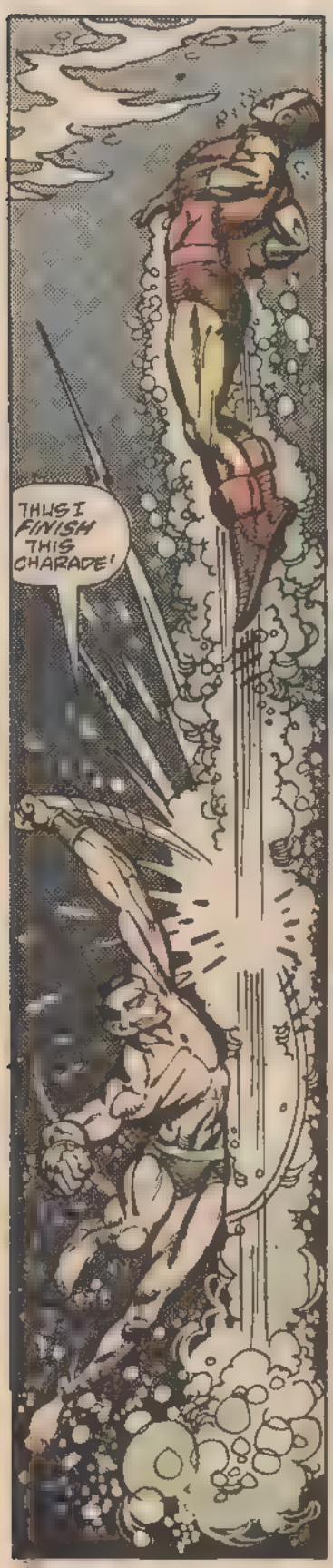
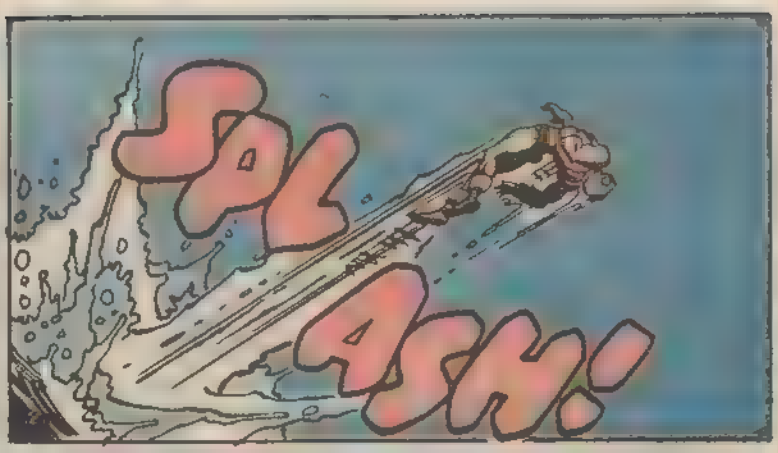
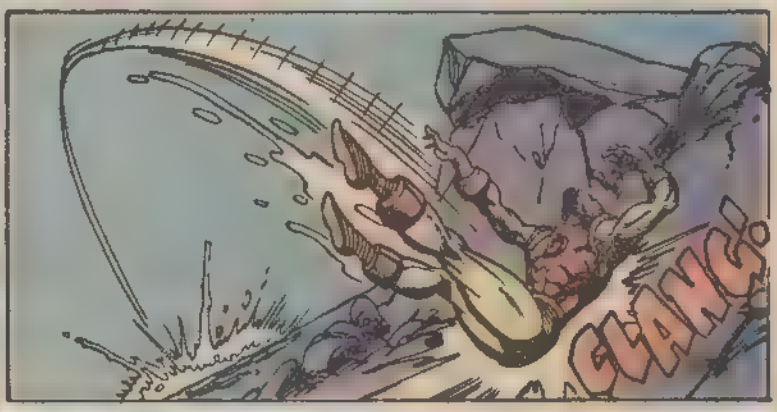
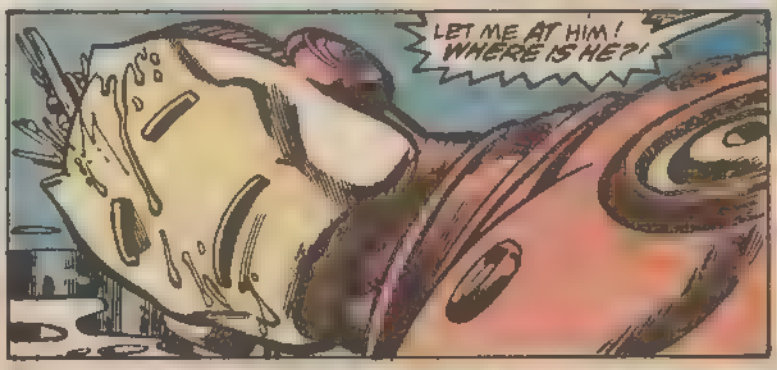
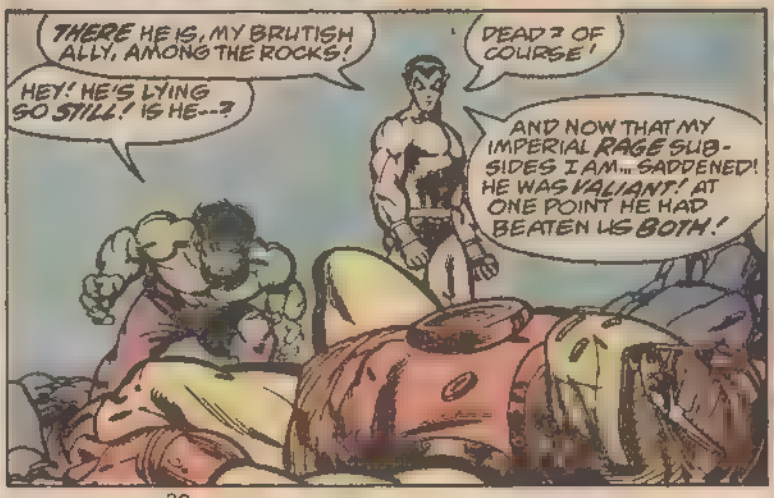
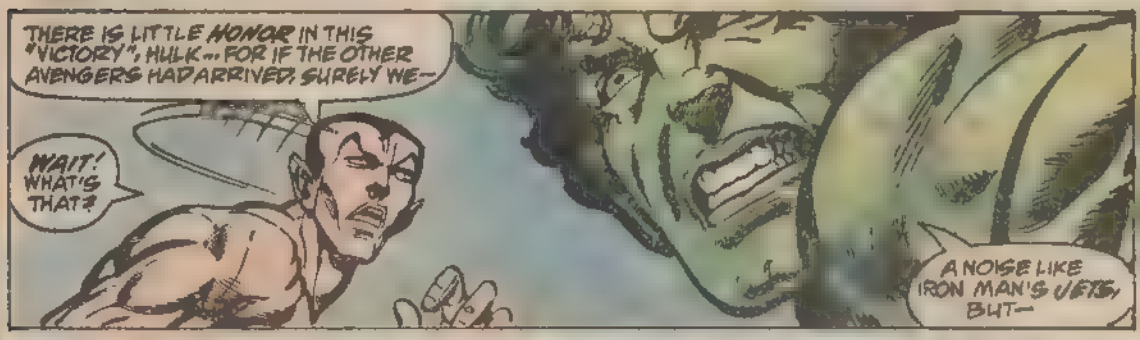

THUS I FINISH THIS CHARADE!

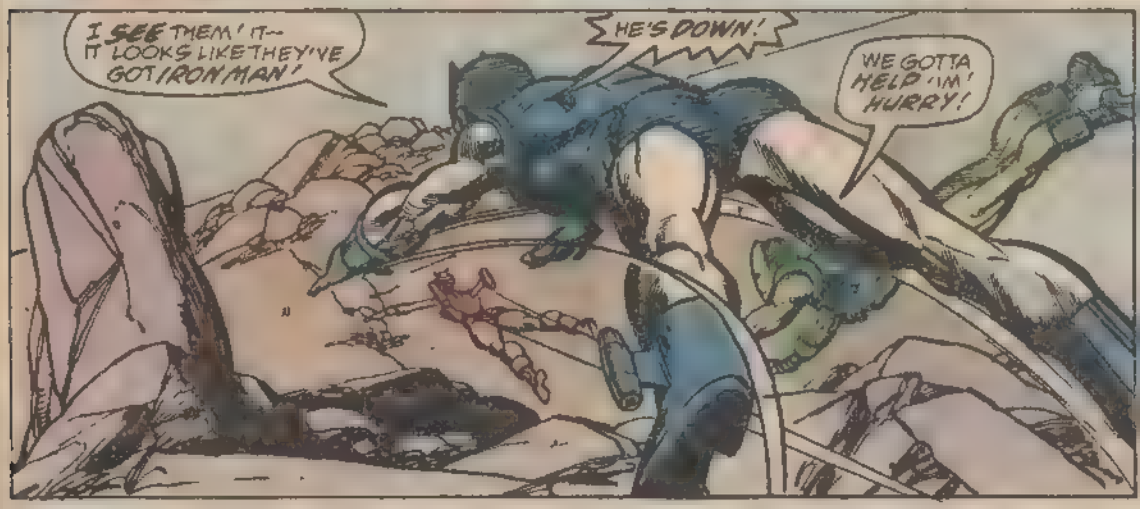

SPLASH!


CLANG!


LET ME AT HIM! WHERE IS HE?!


THERE HE IS, MY BRUTISH ALLY, AMONG THE ROCKS!
HEY! HE'S LYING SO STILL! IS HE--?
DEAD? OF COURSE!
AND NOW THAT MY IMPERIAL RAGE SUBSIDES I AM... SADDENED! HE WAS VALIANT! AT ONE POINT HE HAD BEATEN US BOTH!





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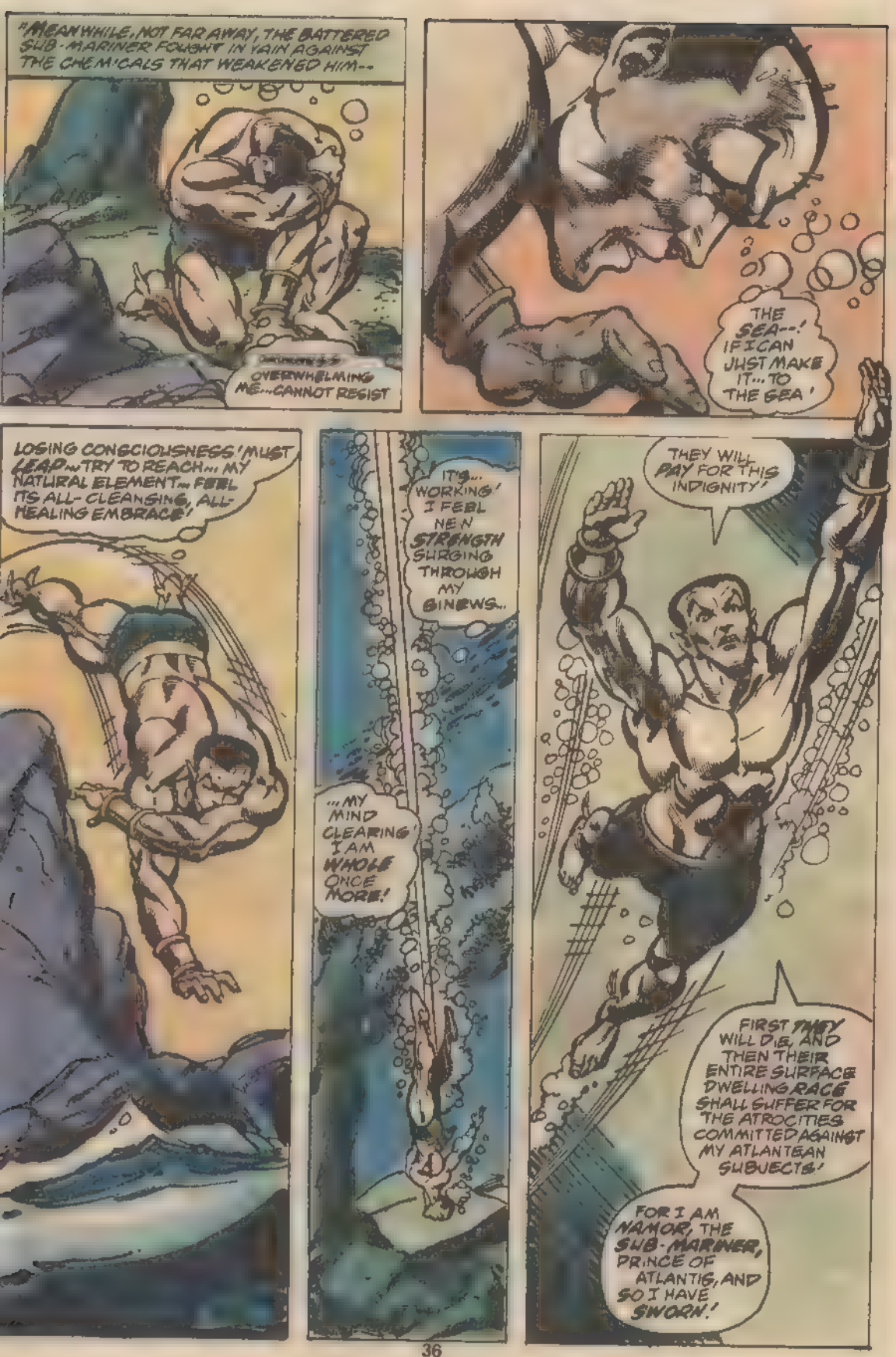
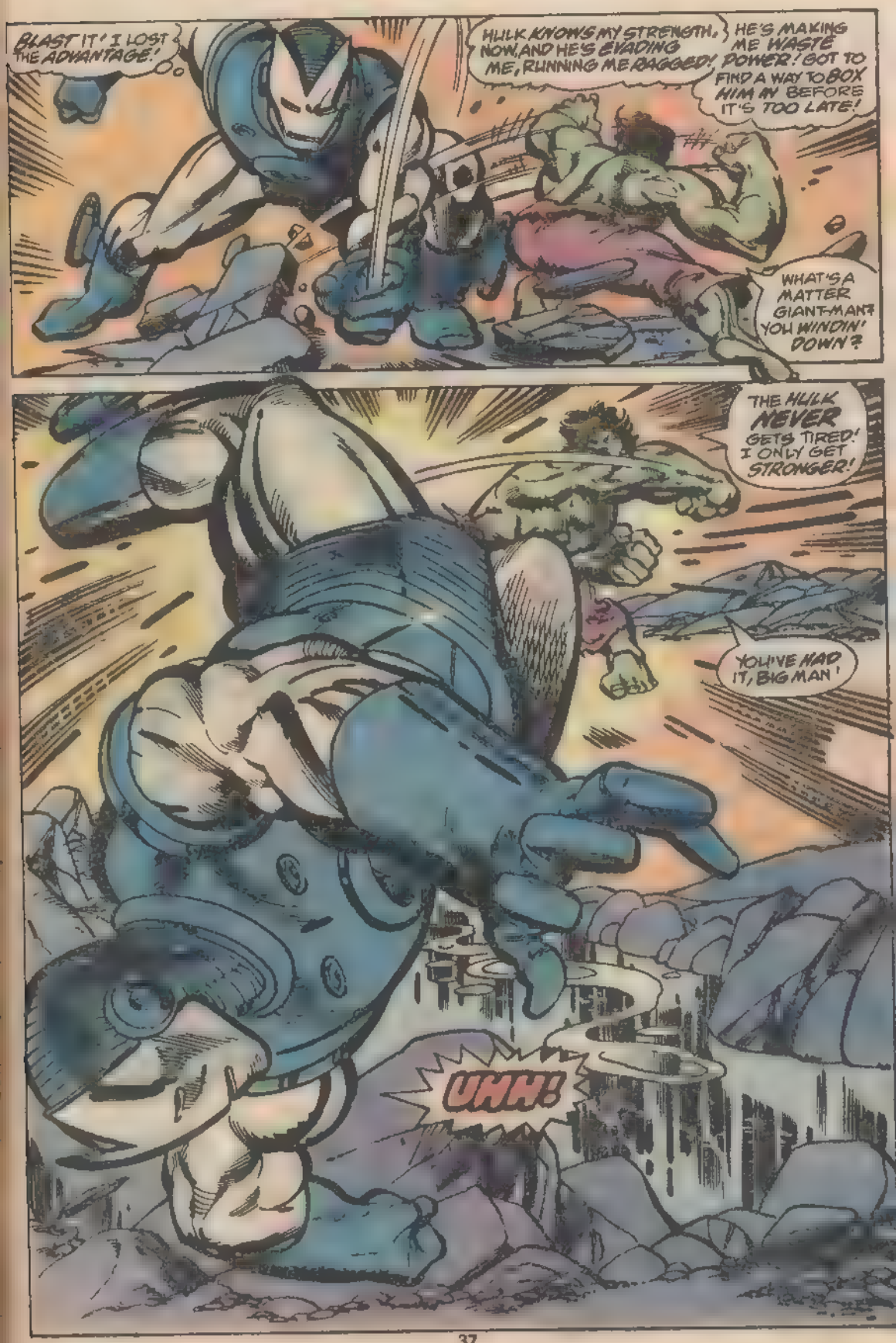
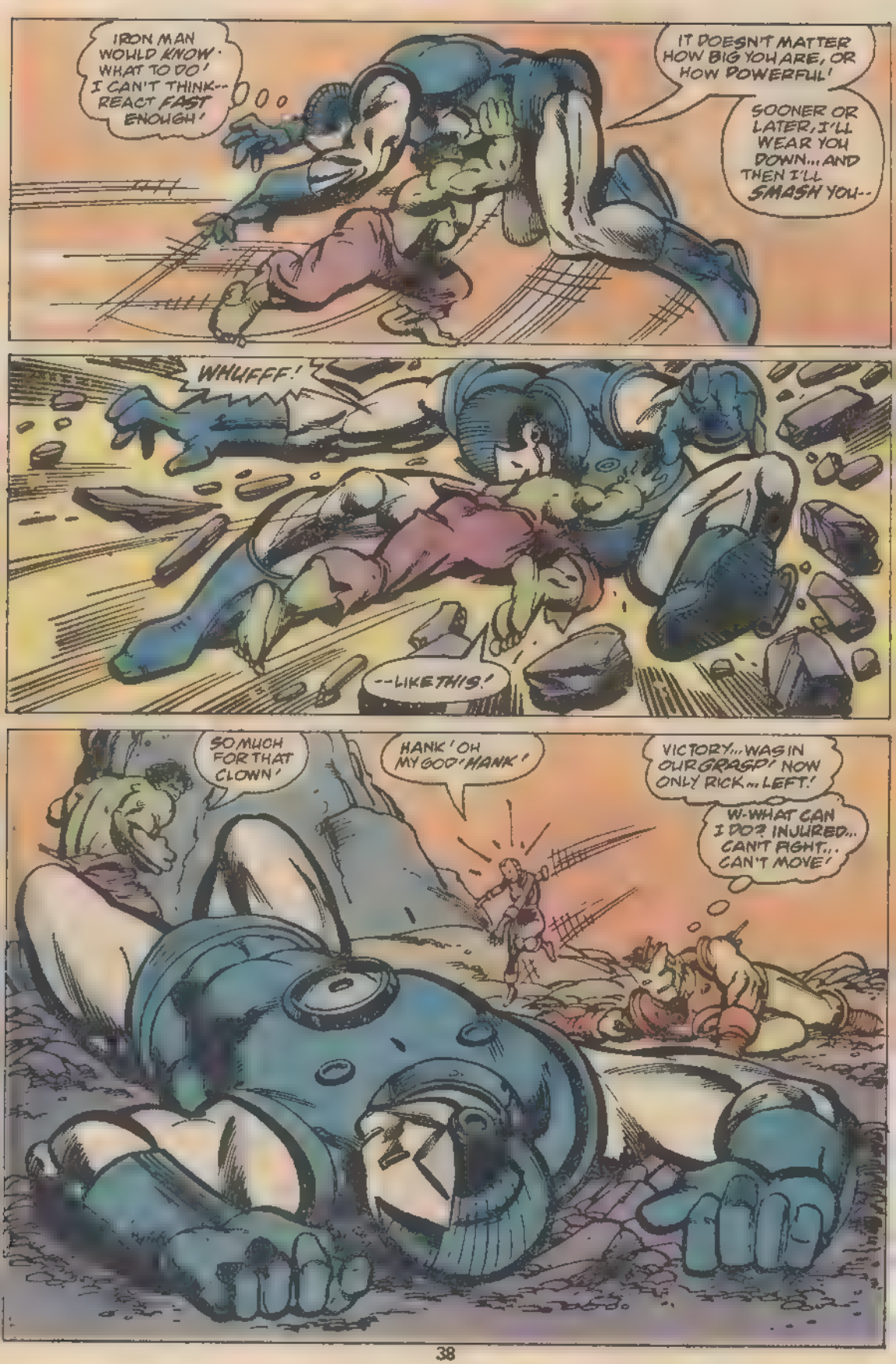
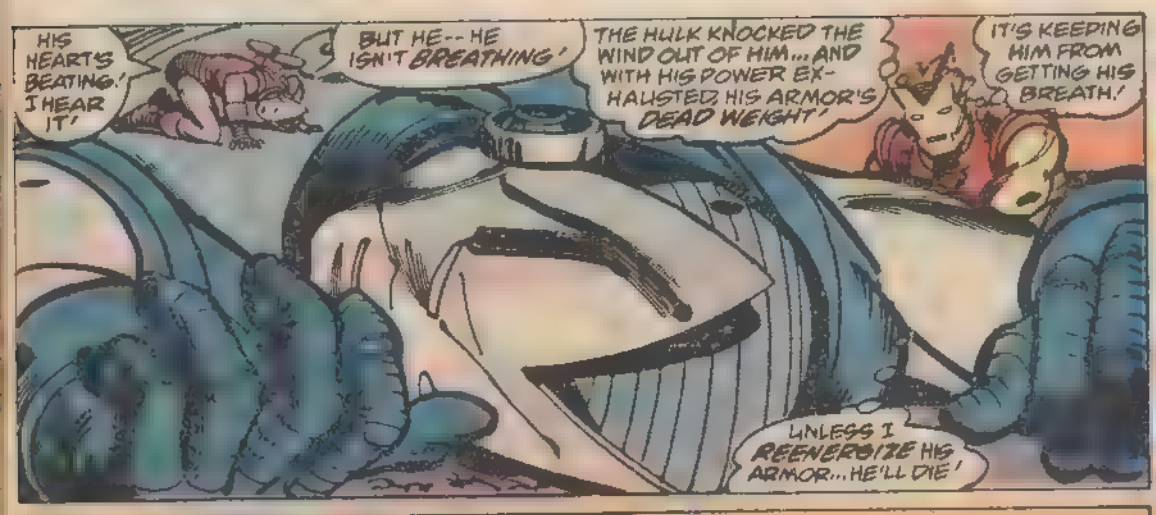
SHE NEVER COULD DO SUCH A THING BEFORE! HOW--?
CAN'T STAND UP... SICK... OHHH-H!
YOU BETTER QUIT WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD GILL-PUSS!
IT WOULDN'T TAKE MUCH TO MAKE ME WANNA FILET YOU!
A PRINCE OF THE BLOOD NEVER YIELDS! ONCE I HAVE YOU IN MY GRASP.
WHAT? HOW-- HOW COULD I MISS?
YOU DIDN'T SHARK FACE!
YOU WENT THROUGH ME! STARK DESIGNED SOME SPECIAL TRICKS INTO MY ARMOR!
GUHHH!
THERE'S A GADGET BUILT INTO THIS SUIT MAKES ME IMMATERIAL WHEN I WANT! A "MOLECULAR OSCILLATOR" ...OR SOM'PIN.
OH, YEAH, IT'S ALSO GOT YOUR STANDARD REPULSERS!
"ELSEWHERE..."
WHA--? NEEDLES HITTING MY FACE! IT'S GIANT-MAN'S PARTNER!
STUPID BUG-WOMAN YOU CAN'T HURT THE HULK--!
MY STINGS WON'T PENETRATE HIS SKIN! BETTER GET OUT OF RANGE BEFORE HE GRABS ME.
HANK, IF I EVER NEEDED YOU--
BACK OFF, WASP! THE HULK'S MY DEPARTMENT!
YES, SIR!
OH, HANK! BE CAREFUL! HE'S SO POWERFUL! SUDDENLY I'M WORRIED FOR THE FIRST TIME!
YOU DON'T SCARE ME, BIG MAN, ARMOR OR NOT!

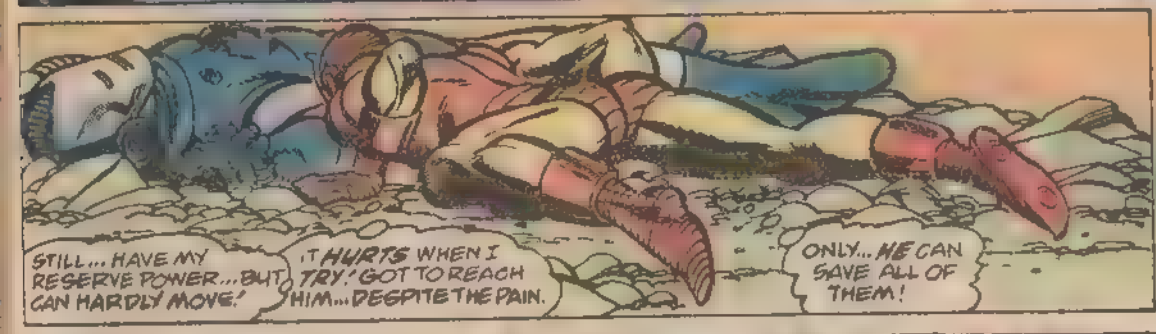
NOBODY IS AS STRONG AS THE HULK! NOBODY!
UFF!
KEEP THINKING THAT, UGLY!
I'M GAINING STRENGTH! BROKEN INSIDE.. BUT NOT AS BAD AS... I THOUGHT!
HAVE TO PULL MYSELF TOGETHER! THEY-- THEY MAY NEED ME... TO HELP WITH--ARMOR!
SO... HARD TO... MOVE!
YOU ALWAYS WERE A CLOWN, GIANT-MAN! MAYBE YOU'RE STRONG NOW--
--BUT I DON'T NEED NO TIN SUIT!
I'M THE HULK! THE HULK!
BLAST IT! AGILITY ISN'T MY FORTE AS JUST PLAIN GIANT-MAN! IN THIS ARMOR, WITHOUT THE YEARS OF PRACTICE IRON MAN HAS HAD, I'M DOWNRIGHT AWKWARD!
BUT IF I CAN KEEP THE HULK ENRAGED-- LUNGING WILDLY AT ME--
WHAM!
--I CAN NEGATE HIS SPEED, AND GET THE MOST OUT OF MY STRENGTH!
UNHNGH!

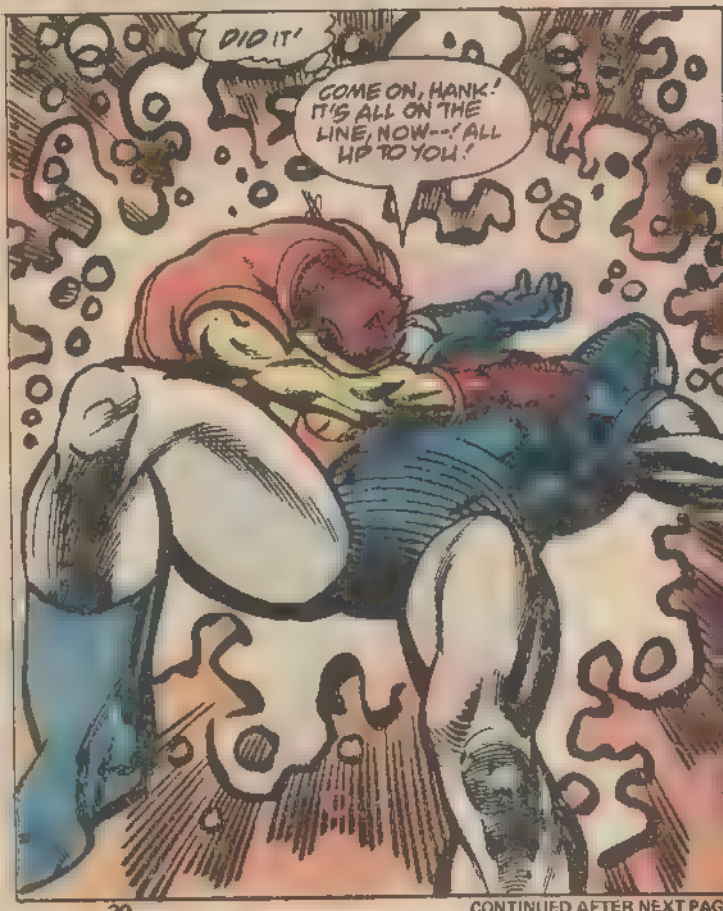

"MEANWHILE, NOT FAR AWAY, THE BATTERED SUB-MARINER FOUGHT IN VAIN AGAINST THE CHEMICALS THAT WEAKENED HIM--
OVERWHELMING ME...CANNOT RESIST
THE SEA--! IF I CAN JUST MAKE IT...TO THE SEA!
LOSING CONSCIOUSNESS! MUST LEAP...TRY TO REACH... MY NATURAL ELEMENT... FEEL ITS ALL-CLEANSING, ALL-HEALING EMBRACE!
IT'S... WORKING! I FEEL NEW STRENGTH SURGING THROUGH MY SINEWS...
...MY MIND CLEARING! I AM WHOLE ONCE MORE!
THEY WILL PAY FOR THIS INDIGNITY!
FIRST THEY WILL DIE, AND THEN THEIR ENTIRE SURFACE DWELLING RACE SHALL SUFFER FOR THE ATROCITIES COMMITTED AGAINST MY ATLANTEAN SUBJECTS!
FOR I AM NAMOR, THE SUB-MARINER, PRINCE OF ATLANTIS, AND SO I HAVE SWORN!


BLAST IT! I LOST THE ADVANTAGE!
HULK KNOWS MY STRENGTH, NOW, AND HE'S EVADING ME, RUNNING ME RAGGED!
HE'S MAKING ME WASTE POWER! GOT TO FIND A WAY TO BOX HIM IN BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
WHAT'S A MATTER GIANT-MAN? YOU WINDIN' DOWN?
THE HULK NEVER GETS TIRED! I ONLY GET STRONGER!
YOU'VE HAD IT, BIG MAN!
UHH!


IRON MAN WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO! I CAN'T THINK-- REACT FAST ENOUGH!
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW BIG YOU ARE, OR HOW POWERFUL!
SOONER OR LATER, I'LL WEAR YOU DOWN... AND THEN I'LL SMASH YOU--
WHUFFF!
--LIKE THIS!
SO MUCH FOR THAT CLOWN!
HANK! OH MY GOD! HANK!
VICTORY... WAS IN OUR GRASP! NOW ONLY RICK... LEFT!
W-WHAT CAN I DO? INJURED... CAN'T FIGHT... CAN'T MOVE!







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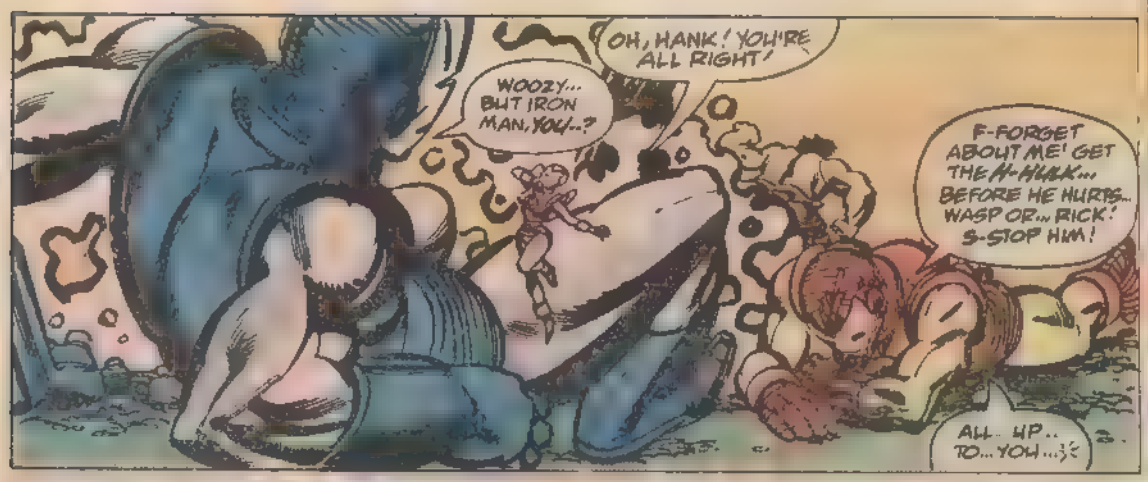
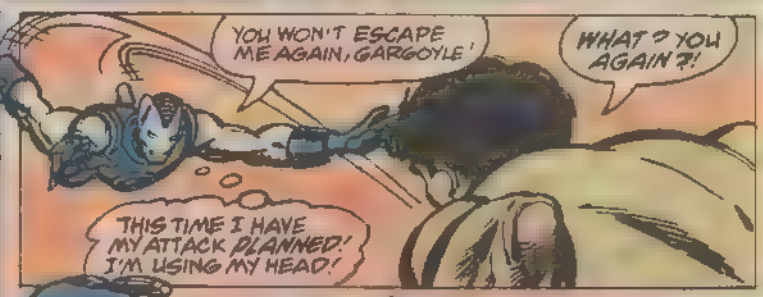
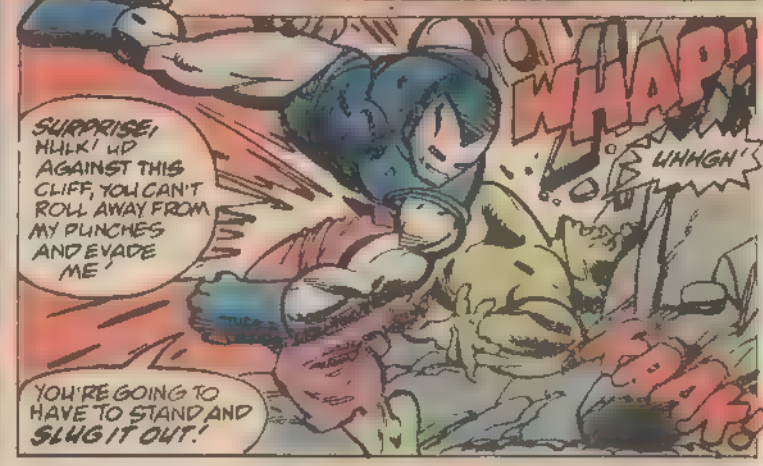
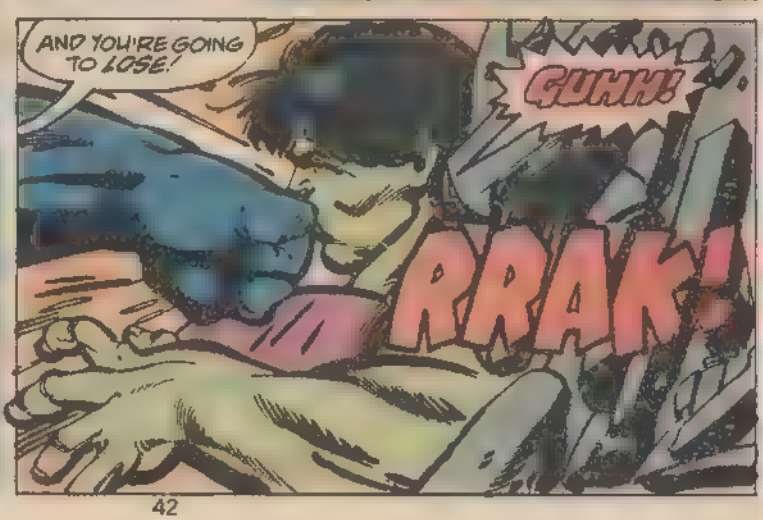
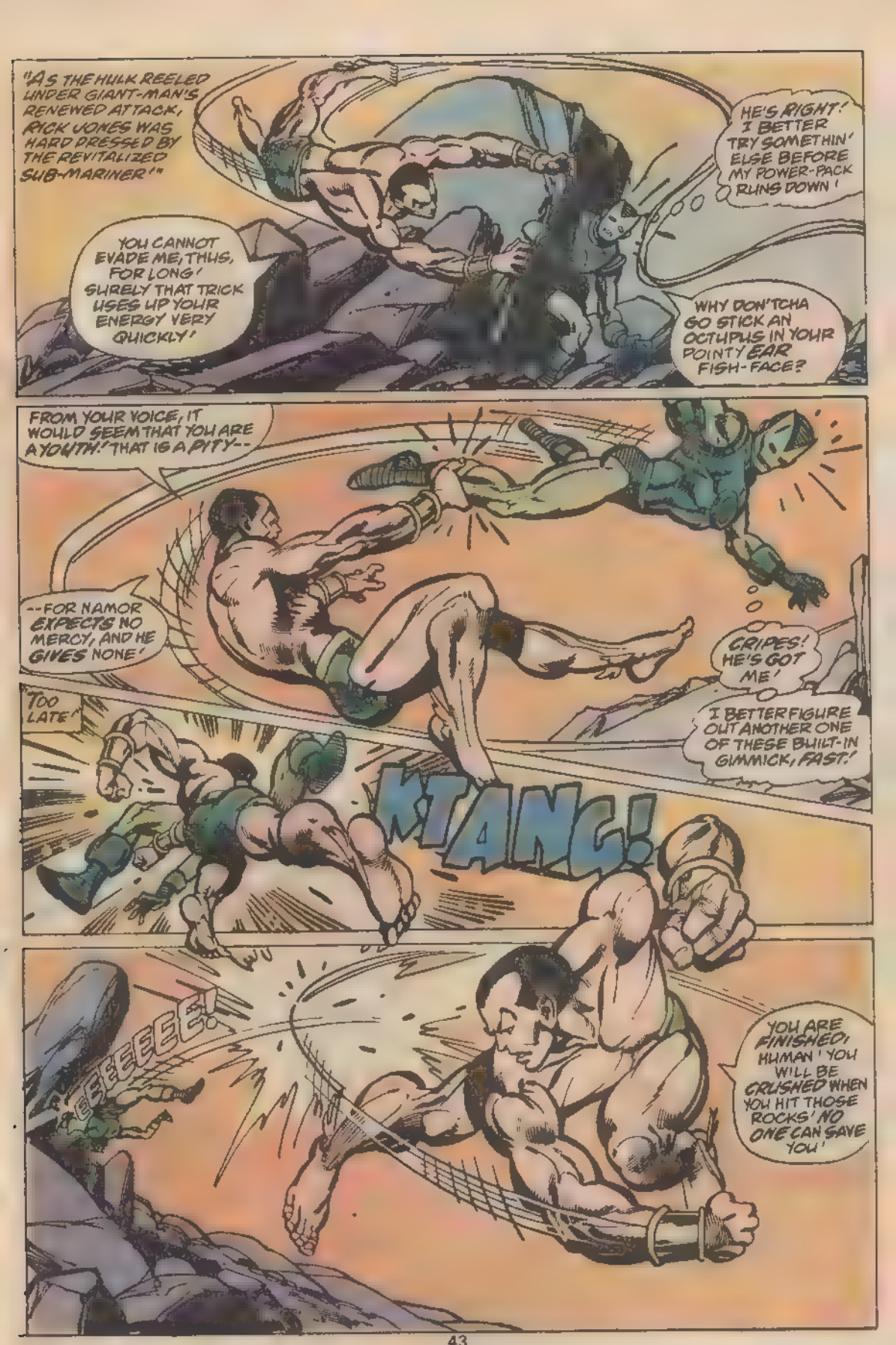

OH, HANK! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
WOOZY... BUT IRON MAN, YOU...?
F-FORGET ABOUT ME! GET THE H-HULK... BEFORE HE HURTS... WASP OR... RICK! S-STOP HIM!
ALL UP... TO... YOU...

YES... IT IS UP TO ME! I CAN'T FAIL AGAIN... CAN'T WASTE THIS SECOND CHANCE!
MY OWN GIANT STRENGTH IS MULTIPLIED A HUNDRED FOLD BY THIS ARMOR! I'M THE MOST POWERFUL BEING ON EARTH! I CAN DO IT--I KNOW I CAN!


YOU WON'T ESCAPE ME AGAIN, GARGOYLE!
WHAT? YOU AGAIN?!
THIS TIME I HAVE MY ATTACK PLANNED! I'M USING MY HEAD!


SURPRISE, HULK! UP AGAINST THIS CLIFF, YOU CAN'T ROLL AWAY FROM MY PUNCHES AND EVADE ME!
WHAP!
UHHGH!
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO STAND AND SLUG IT OUT!


AND YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE!
GUHH!
RRAK!

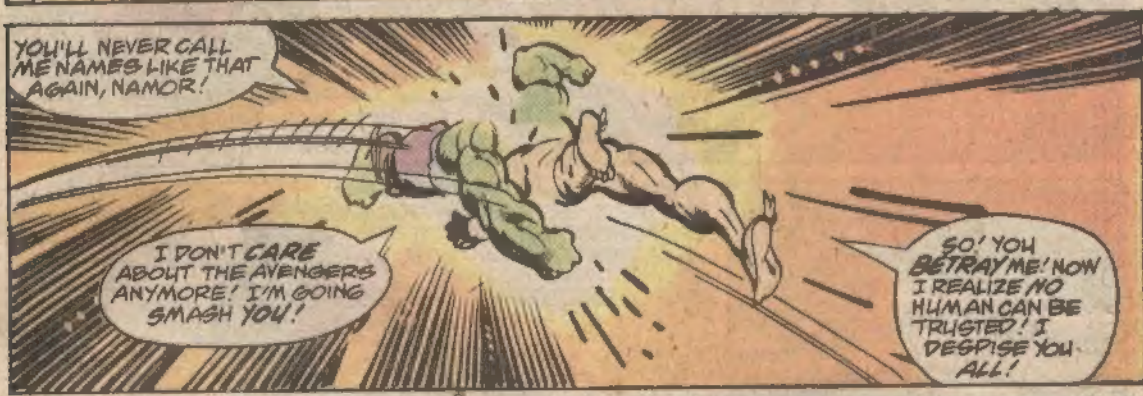

"AS THE HULK REELED UNDER GIANT-MAN'S RENEWED ATTACK, RICK JONES WAS HARD PRESSED BY THE REVITALIZED SUB-MARINER'"
YOU CANNOT EVADE ME, THUS, FOR LONG! SURELY THAT TRICK USES UP YOUR ENERGY VERY QUICKLY!
HE'S RIGHT! I BETTER TRY SOMETHIN' ELSE BEFORE MY POWER-PACK RUNS DOWN!
WHY DON'TCHA GO STICK AN OCTUPUS IN YOUR POINTY EAR FISH-FACE?
FROM YOUR VOICE, IT WOULD SEEM THAT YOU ARE A YOUTH! THAT IS A PITY--
--FOR NAMOR EXPECTS NO MERCY, AND HE GIVES NONE!
CRIPES! HE'S GOT ME!
TOO LATE!
I BETTER FIGURE OUT ANOTHER ONE OF THESE BUILT-IN GIMMICK, FAST!
KTANG!
EEEEEEE!
YOU ARE FINISHED, HUMAN! YOU WILL BE CRUSHED WHEN YOU HIT THOSE ROCKS! NO ONE CAN SAVE YOU!

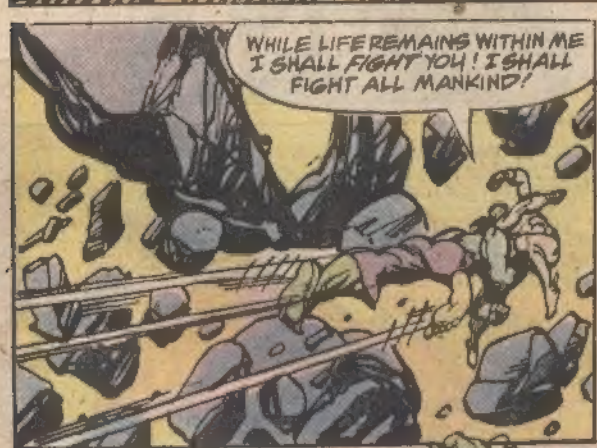
"BUT AS HE HURTLED TO HIS DOOM, RICK JONES' SCREAM OF PAIN AND TERROR PIERCED THE DIN OF BATTLE..."
RICK--?!
EEEEEEEEEE
THAT'S RICK!
"THERE WAS ONE WHO MIGHT SAVE THE LAD!"
CAN'T... PULL UP! I'M GONNA GET PULPED!
NO! NOT THE BOY!

GOT YOU!
UHH!

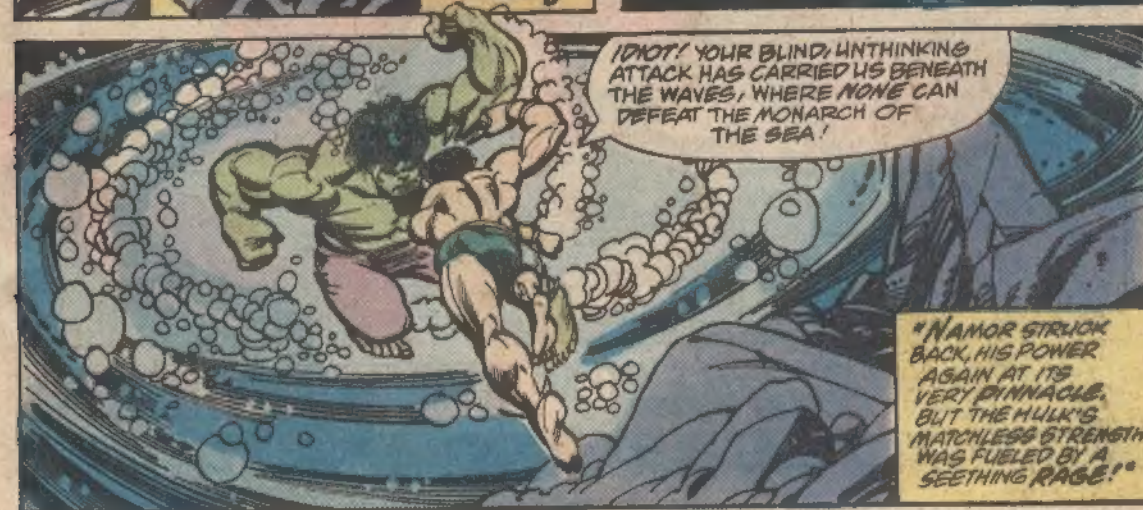
NAMOR!
NAMOR--! YOU DIRTY, FLAT-HEADED SCUM! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!
OHHH-H!

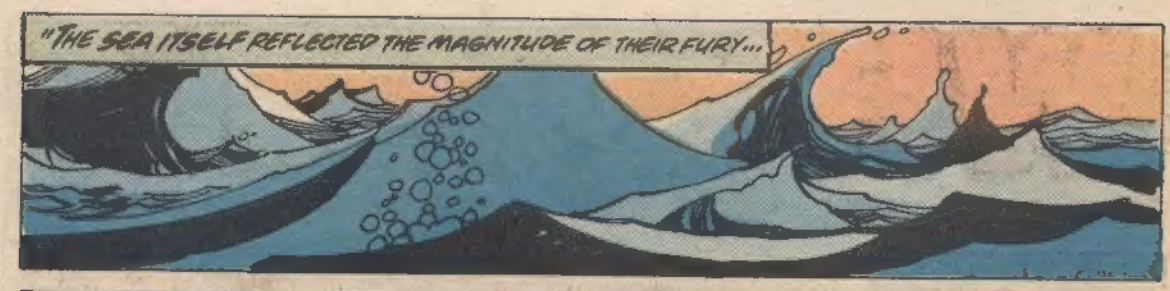
YOU TRIED TO KILL HIM! HE'S ONLY A KID!
HE IS AN ENEMY!
HE MUST DIE, SO THAT I CAN AID YOU AGAINST THE GIANT ONE! VICTORY CAN STILL BE OURS, YOU LUMBERING OAF!

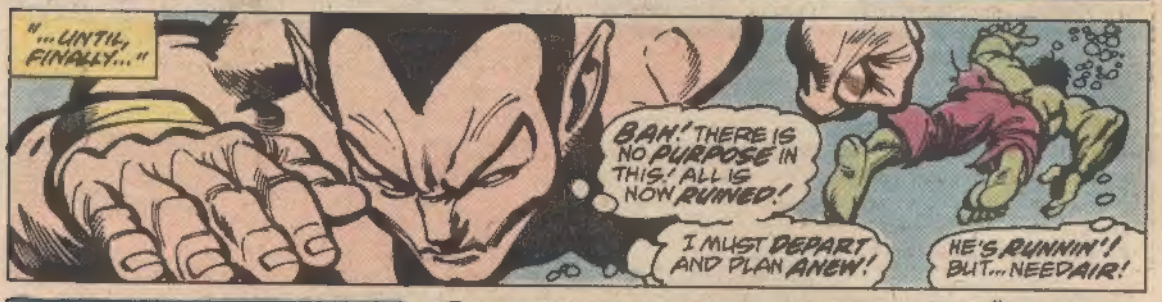

YOU'LL NEVER CALL ME NAMES LIKE THAT AGAIN, NAMOR!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE AVENGERS ANYMORE! I'M GOING SMASH YOU!
SO! YOU BETRAY ME! NOW I REALIZE NO HUMAN CAN BE TRUSTED! I DESPISE YOU ALL!

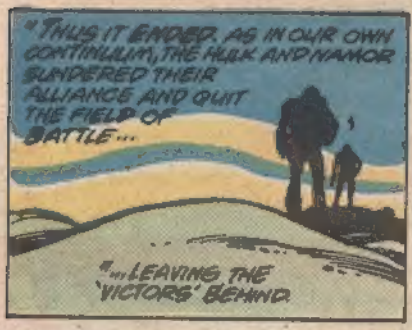

WHILE LIFE REMAINS WITHIN ME I SHALL FIGHT YOU! I SHALL FIGHT ALL MANKIND!

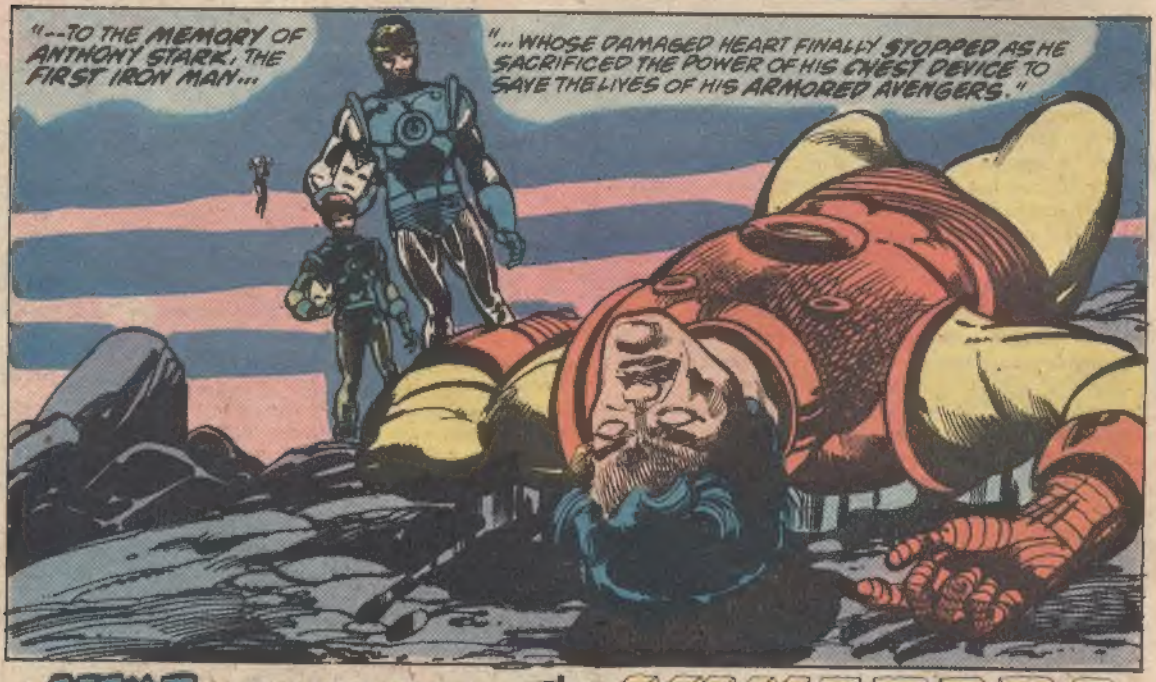
FWOOSH!


IDIOT! YOUR BLIND, UNTHINKING ATTACK HAS CARRIED US BENEATH THE WAVES, WHERE NONE CAN DEFEAT THE MONARCH OF THE SEA!
"NAMOR STRUCK BACK, HIS POWER AGAIN AT ITS VERY PINNACLE. BUT THE HULK'S MATCHLESS STRENGTH WAS FUELED BY A SEETHING RAGE!"









NEXT ISSUE: WHAT IF... THE INVADERS HAD BATTLED BEYOND WORLD WAR II?

WHY NOT?

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 575 MADISON AVE. N.Y.C. 10022

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY NOTE: Whew! When Rascally Roy Thomas, who's handling this ever-lovin' letters page, said last ish that WHAT IF #1 was garnering an unprecedented amount of mail, he didn't know the half of it! 575 Madison Avenue (and, channeled thru it, Roy's own overcrowded office on the West Coast) has been literally deluged with comments, 'way over 90% of them favorable, about our first all-new bimonthly 50¢ title. The hard part about doing this LP was to wade thru the maelstrom of missives and decide the few we could print. Anyway, here are some random and typical (except for the unfavorable comment or two, which were decidedly atypical) asides--!

It never ceases to amaze me, the way Roy Thomas' writing can defuse even my most strongly-held prejudices. When I first heard of the new WHAT IF series, I was vehemently against it. But after reading the first issue—well, *if* the Watcher's casual near-omniscience will continue to be used to explain seeming paradoxes from the Marvel Universe (like, why he looked so different in F.F. #13, or where exactly the Spider-Man/Superman battle took place); *if*, while this new series progresses, the rest of Marvel Comics will compensate with fewer parallel-world stories and more attention to consistency and continuity; and *if* each issue is as fine as this one, then I will keep my mouth shut (more or less) and my mind and wallet open as each new WHAT IF comes to town.

Bennet Marks, 840 Coleman Ave.
Menlo Park, CA 94025

I think I've figured out why you are doing the WHAT IF book with its parallel-world stories. First: Marvel made its name because of realistic stories; therefore it would be absurd to have imaginary stories published by a company which stands for realism. Second: Marvel's unending quest to make the proverbial fast buck. What young comic reader could possibly turn away from a story in which this earth's Fantastic Four meets an F.F. which has Spider-Man among its members?

Neil Jackson, 95 Oldfield Rd.
Willesden, London, England

No offense, Neil, but that "fast-buck" charge is one that really irks us, and we're going to take just a second to tell you what we think about it. Marvel (and any other publishing company) may be in business to make a profit, but how does it *make* that profit? Only one way: by putting out comic-mags that a large number of readers want to see. As you yourself admit, a lot of people will be interested in picking up a story in which Spider-Man joins the Fantastic Four. As far as we're concerned, that's precisely the reason why we *should* put out such a comic-book as WHAT IF! Seems to us like, by your accounting, we're "damned if we do and damned if we don't": If we publish a mag nobody likes, there'll be loud outcries that we're letting our readers down and ignoring their wishes; while, if we put out a mag which people like and buy, we're accused of just going after the almighty dollar and nothing else. C'mon, lad—you can't have it both ways! —Roy T.

Not since CONAN #1 have I waited with such anticipating the debut of a comic book.

Mitch Paul, R.R. 1
Rockland, Ontario, Canada

Congratulations to Roy Thomas for thinking up this incredibly far-out series. Who'd ever believe J. Jonah Jameson actually saying, "The Daily Bugle endorses Spider-Man!" This series has a lot of potential. By the way, can you tell me why you picked "Why Not?" as the name of your letters section. **[Why not? R.T.]**

Warren Burr, 49 Berry Dr.
Wayne, NJ 07470

I think you've got a winner here. At first I thought WHAT IF was going to be something like NOT BRAND ECHH, but I was wrong; this mag's better!

Jim Sengos, 14261 Thornwood
River View, MI 48192

WHAT IF #1 was great! The only problem is, how do us readers know what happened to Sue after she left with the Sub-Mariner? I mean, there should be a continuation issue.

[What does the rest of Marveldom Assembled think about a sequel to WHAT IF #17--Roy.]

Doug DuBoff, 15 Hearthstone
Livingston, NJ 07039

Bravo! The WHAT IF concept is certain to become one of Marvel's most popular. Where else can both creator and reader fulfill their wildest dreams? The first issue, however, left me somewhat disappointed. The artwork was only fair and the dialogue only slightly better. Yet, for an idea going through its birth-pangs, I suppose one should learn to expect as much. I dare anyone to look at the early issues of SPIDER-MAN, when Mr. Ditko was the artist and Mr. Lee the author, and tell me Spidey hasn't come an incredibly long way—as have we all!

Jonathan Hochberg, 460 Riverside Dr.
New York, NY 10027

About Jim and Pablo's art: Recalling Jim's efforts for another company just a year ago, it's more than fair to say that the Bullpen has snared another talent on the rise. Like the story, the art was evocative where it had to be and fresh where it counted. Keep Jim Craig busy (Pablo, too)!

Ed McCarthy, 202 W. 88th
New York, NY 10024

AND NOW, FOR A HAPPY ENDING: Next issue, if Crom is willing and the creeks don't rise (to coin a phrase), we'll be presenting one of the most asked-for and yet potentially controversial tales in mighty Marvel history: WHAT IF CONAN THE BARBARIAN WALKED THE EARTH TODAY? The story's by Roy Thomas, and the art's by Big John Buscema—need we say more? Meanwhile, we hope you enjoyed Roy and Herb's re-teaming on last issue's Hulk thriller. Messrs. Thomas and Trimpe had a blast working together again after all these long months—and they hope it showed! See you in sixty, faithful one?